



## MOLD FACTS & PREVENTION TIPS

Events such as roof leaks, water pipe leaks, blocked A/C condensation drain pipes, broken hot water heaters, window condensation and the most common on the coast, high relative humidity, can quickly lead to mold growth inside your residence. Avoiding or at least identifying these and other moisture/water events quickly can reduce the high cost of mold remediation and the negative effects on your indoor air quality.

### Mold

When excessive moisture accumulates in buildings or on building materials, mold growth will often occur, particularly if the moisture problem remains undiscovered or unaddressed. Mold growth can occur within 24 to 48 hours. It is impossible to eliminate all molds and mold spores in the indoor environment. However, mold growth can be controlled indoors by controlling the indoor relative humidity and moisture.

Molds produce tiny spores to reproduce, just as plants produce pollen. These airborne mold spores can be found in both indoor and outdoor air, and they settle on indoor and outdoor surfaces. Mold spores are invisible to the naked eye because they are microscopic in size, generally between 2-10  $\mu\text{m}$  ( $\mu\text{m}$  = one millionth of a meter). All molds have the potential to cause health effects. Molds produce allergens, irritants, and in some cases toxins that may cause reactions in humans. The types and severity of symptoms depend, in part, on the types of molds present, the extent of an individual's exposure, the ages of the individuals, and their existing sensitivities or allergies.

### Mold Prevention Tips

There is no practical way to eliminate all molds and mold spores in the indoor environment. The most effective way to control indoor mold growth is to control moisture and moisture build-up.

- **If your A/C does not have a condensation drain pipe cut-off switch installed, please install one.** Slime builds up in the condensation drain pipe and blocks the drain, resulting in water and mold damage in the A/C closet as well as potentially impacting adjacent rooms.
- **Use a quality MERV (Minimum Efficient Rating Value) rated filter of 7 or greater to prevent dust debris build up on the A/C coils.** If you can see through your filter, it is low quality. Filters with a MERV between 7 and 13 are likely to be nearly as effective as true HEPA filters at controlling most airborne indoor particles.
- **Sunlight is arguably your most powerful natural weapon against most mold and mildew.** When mold growth resulting from high humidity is observed, you typically see the visible mold growth in dark or shaded areas in your residence, such as inside closets and cabinets or behind furniture placed against walls. Storm shutters and blinds on windows and doors are good for security but places your residence in a cave-like environment which is ideal for mold growth, especially when you are away for extended periods of time.

- **Maintaining good air circulation is essential to preventing mold inside the home.** Mold spores thrive in stagnant air, and a lack of air circulation can prevent moisture evaporation, further increasing your risk of developing mold and mildew. Turn ceiling fans and exhaust fans on low, especially when leaving your residence unoccupied for periods of time. Also, since most closets do not have A/C supply vents, leave the doors open on closets and bedrooms to increase air circulation. Additionally, leave space between clothes hanging in the closets to facilitate air flow through the clothes. Use damp rid bags in closets.
- **Maintaining the relative humidity inside your residence below 60% is highly recommended.** In order to check the humidity levels, you should have a relative humidity meter or at least a humidity ornament. Also, your A/C should be set to maintain relative humidity below 60% with the thermostat set around 76-78 degrees. Alternatively, you may use a portable dehumidifier to help control the relative humidity. Typically the dehumidifier drains into a bucket inside the unit, which has to be emptied periodically. If you are away for an extended period of time, place the dehumidifier on a kitchen countertop where it can drain into a kitchen sink.
- Condensation, especially in the colder months, can collect in the corners of the window and door casings causing moisture impacts which lead to mold growth. **The collected moisture/water in the corners of the window casings should be dried with a towel routinely and Tylex applied where needed.**
- **Periodically inspect all potential water sources.** This includes kitchen and vanity plumbing under the cabinets, toilet water supply, refrigerator water lines, A/C condensation drain pipes, hot water heaters, corners of windows and door casings, and even your ceiling for potential water impacts. Identifying moisture/water intrusions early can prevent costly remediation of water damage and mold. **Upon discovery of mold impacts, please consider how to approach/contain potential air borne mold spores from impacting other rooms and areas.**
- Your carpet collects almost every spilled material, airborne contaminant and tracked soil that enters your home. This includes bacteria, allergens and pollutants. Laminated flooring appears to be durable but once subjected to moisture cupping of the joints can appear. Moisture/water that seeps underneath the flooring is trapped by the laminated surface causing mold growth between the flooring and subfloor. **Ceramic tile, however, is durable and resistant to most moisture/water impacts.**
- **Placing UV lights inside the air handler has proven to be effective in preventing mold growth inside the air handler housing,** but can be costly. The ideal location for UV lights is inside the air handler, especially if the UV lights are placed near elements of the system where moisture most often collects. This would include the coils, condenser and drip pan.

Chuck Brogdon, CIE  
 Environmental Professional  
 CFL Environmental Solutions, Inc.  
 2665 N. Atlantic Avenue #323  
 Daytona Beach, Florida 32118  
 Phone: 386-679-7326  
 Fax: 386-615-2043  
 Email: [Chuck@cflenvironmental.com](mailto:Chuck@cflenvironmental.com)  
[www.cflenvironmental.com](http://www.cflenvironmental.com)