



HOUSING HIGHLIGHTS

MOLD!!!!

What is mold?

Mold is a type of fungus that needs water to grow. There are *at least* 100,000 different kinds of mold.

Small amounts of mold are found naturally indoors and outdoors. When indoor humidity levels are too high or if there are wet or damp conditions, mold spores can begin growing and create problems. Indoor mold problems are common on drywall, ceiling tiles or other surfaces that can retain water. However, mold can grow on almost anything that becomes wet or damp.

How do I know if I have mold?

Usually, you will be able to see mold growing. You may also smell a musty, earthy or foul odor. Mold can come in a variety of colors (including black, blue, green-grey, brown-grey, pink, purple or orange) and can look differently (including slimy, furry or spotted).

Some mold will always be present in a home. Small patches of mold may not be a problem. For example, mold found on bathroom tile, on a shower curtain or on window moldings usually are not cause for concern. However, when mold covers a large surface area, such as an entire wall or ceiling, it could indicate a larger issue.

Should I buy a test kit?

No. Because mold is present naturally on almost all surfaces and in the air, mold test kits are not reliable and are likely to result in a false positive.

Is mold dangerous to me and my family?

Possibly. Molds have the potential to cause health problems. Molds can be allergens, irritants and in some rare cases, potentially toxic.

Most health problems happen when a person has an allergy to mold. An allergic person could have watery eyes, runny nose, sneezing or a skin rash. Mold exposure could also trigger an asthma attack in certain people.

Mold exposure could also irritate the eyes, skin, nose, throat and lungs of allergic and non-allergic people.

Different people will have different responses to mold. It is possible for a home to have large amounts of mold and not have any health impact on its residents and it is possible for small amounts of mold to trigger severe reactions. If you are experiencing symptoms you believe are caused by mold you should contact your doctor.

Because different people have different medical reactions to mold there is no legal standard for what amount of mold is considered safe. There are currently no local, county, state or federal housing codes on safe levels of mold.

Who can I call?

Unfortunately the Erie County Department of Health does not inspect for mold. *This is because there is no legal standard for how much mold is safe.*

Mold is often caused by water from faulty plumbing, roof leaks or other mechanical or structural problems in the dwelling. These issues will be reported by the Health Department and a landlord will be instructed to make timely repairs.



If you are interested in having your home inspected, or if you would like to receive an information packet on mold, you may contact the Health Department at 961 6800. You may also contact city or town building inspector if the problems in your apartment are not being addressed.

How should mold be cleaned up?

The first step to mold cleanup is to control the moisture problem. The techniques used for cleaning mold will depend on the amount of mold to be cleaned and the severity of the problem. In all cases, an "N-95" respirator, gloves and goggles should be worn. According to the New York State Department of Health,



small patches of mold can be cleaned using a 10% bleach solution. There are several local companies that specialize in mold remediation that will give estimates to clean up a larger mold problem.

How can I prevent mold?

Keep humidity levels low. Don't use humidifiers or vaporizers and always run exhaust vents and fans in kitchens and bathrooms. It is effective to use a dehumidifier in basements and other humid areas. Do not "finish" basements that are prone to flooding or humidity.

Report all plumbing leaks, roof leaks and moisture problems immediately to your landlord. If your landlord refuses to make repairs contact the building inspectors and the Erie County Department of Health.

Mold typically grows within 24-48 hours following an event such as flooding. Mold will grow faster in hot and humid weather.

It is important to dry an area completely as quickly as possible. It may be necessary to remove or dispose of items such as carpet or stuffed furniture that cannot be dried quickly. Dehumidifiers and water-extracting vacuums can aid in the drying process.



Where can I get more information?

- Environmental Protection Agency
www.epa.gov/mold
- Center for Disease Control
www.cdc.gov/mold
- New York State Department of Health
1-800-458-1158 ext. 27800
- Erie County Department of Health
961-6800

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