

Mass Lung & Allergy, PC

Mold Allergy

Mold Allergy: What it is ... and Isn't

Important Molds

Alternaria. A common outdoor mold; allergy to this mold can be associated with severe asthma.

Cladosporium. The most common airborne outdoor mold

Aspergillus. A common indoor and outdoor mold

Penicillium. A common indoor mold; allergy to which is not associated with antibiotic allergy

Helminthosporium. More commonly found in warmer climates.

Epicoccum. Found in grassland and agricultural areas.

Fusarium. Commonly found on rotting plants.

Rhizopus and Mucor. Commonly found on decaying leaves and damp indoor areas. Airborne forms of these molds are less common.

Yeasts. Commonly found in the air during wet periods in agricultural areas. Allergic disease to *Candida albicans* is controversial, despite some people having positive allergy testing to this type of mold.

Mold Allergy

If you have a respiratory mold allergy, your immune system overreacts when you breathe in mold spores. This reaction triggers a cascade of reactions that lead to allergy symptoms. Like other respiratory allergies, mold allergy can make you cough, make your eyes itch and cause other symptoms that make you miserable. In some people, mold allergy is linked to asthma and exposure causes shortness of breath and other symptoms. Molds are very common both inside and outside. Mold, also known as fungus, is a family of organisms that are found throughout nature. They differ from plants or animals in how they reproduce and grow. The "seeds," called spores, are spread by the wind outdoors and by air indoors. Some

spores are released in dry, windy weather. Others are released with the fog or dew when humidity is high. There are many different types, but only certain kinds of mold cause allergies. Being allergic to one type of mold doesn't necessarily mean you'll be allergic to another. Allergic symptoms from mold spores are most common from July to late summer. But with molds growing in so many places, allergic reactions can occur year round.



Toxic Mold

The term "toxic mold" is a misnomer and has no scientific basis. Some molds, called "toxigenic molds" produce byproducts called mycotoxins, which in high enough doses, can be beneficial or detrimental to human health. A common mycotoxin is penicillin - a useful antibiotic. Extreme exposure to very high levels of mycotoxins may lead to health problems; fortunately such exposures rarely to never occur in normal exposure, even in residences with serious mold problems. Toxic effects may be the result of chronic activation of the immune system, leading to chronic inflammation. Allergy testing *does not* evaluate patients who feel they suffer from mold toxicity.

What Times of the Year Does Mold Allergy Occur?

In colder climates, molds can be found in the outdoor air starting in the late winter, and peaking in the late summer to early fall months (July to October). In warmer climates, mold spores may be found throughout the year, with the highest levels found in the late summer to early fall months. While indoor molds can occur year round and are dependent on moisture levels in the home, indoor mold levels are higher when outdoor mold levels are higher. Therefore, a common source of indoor mold is from the outside environment, although can also be from indoor mold contamination.

How To Reduce Indoor Mold Levels

- Prevent outdoor molds from entering the home by keeping doors and windows closed and using air conditioning equipped with allergen-grade air filters.
- Control indoor moisture with the use of dehumidifiers.
- Fix water leaks in bathrooms, kitchens and basements.
- Ensure adequate ventilation of moist areas
- Limit indoor houseplants; ensure those present are free of mold on leaves and in potting soil
- Stay indoors during periods when the published mold count is high.
- Remove bathroom carpeting where moisture is a concern.
- Clean refrigerator door gaskets and garbage pails frequently.
- Throw away or recycle old books, newspapers, clothing or bedding.
- Promote ground water drainage away from a house.