



## DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH County of Riverside

INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN NO. 88-17-EPO

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND OVERSIGHT DIVISION

### MOLD FACT SHEET

#### *What are molds?*

Molds are fungi that can be found both indoors and outdoors. No one knows exactly how many species of fungi exist but estimates range from tens of thousands to perhaps three hundred thousand or more. Molds grow best in warm, damp, and humid conditions, and spread and reproduce by making spores. Mold spores can survive harsh environmental conditions, such as dry conditions, that do not support normal mold growth (Centers for Disease Control (CDC), 2012).

#### *How do molds affect people?*

Some people are sensitive to molds. For these people, exposure to molds can cause symptoms such as nasal stuffiness, eye irritation, wheezing, or skin irritation. Some people, such as those with serious allergies to molds, may have more severe reactions. Severe reactions may occur among workers exposed to large amounts of molds in occupational settings, such as farmers working around moldy hay. Severe reactions may include shortness of breath, respiratory infections, and asthma attacks in those who already have asthma. Some people with chronic lung illnesses, such as obstructive lung disease, may develop mold infections in their lungs (CDC, 2012).

#### *How can people decrease mold exposure?*

Sensitive individuals should avoid areas that are likely to have mold, such as compost piles, cut grass, and wooded areas. Inside homes, mold growth can be slowed by keeping humidity levels between 40% and 60%, and ventilating showers and cooking areas. If there is mold growth in your home, you should clean up the mold and remove the damp materials as soon as possible (CDC, 2012). Other recommendations for controlling mold in the home include:

- Keep the humidity level in the house as low as you can – no higher than 50%.
- Use an air conditioner or a dehumidifier during humid months.
- Be sure the home has adequate ventilation, including exhaust fans.
- Add mold inhibitors to paints before application.
- Clean bathrooms with mold killing products.
- Do not carpet bathrooms and basements.
- Remove or replace previously soaked carpets and upholstery.

#### *I found mold growing in my home, how do I test the mold?*

There is no government agency that provides mold investigation services to the general public; however you may hire an Indoor Air Quality Consultant or an Indoor Air Quality Abatement Company to assist you with investigation and/or cleanup. If you are a renter and you feel your landlord/property owner has not been responsive to your concerns regarding mold, you can contact your local housing authority. Contact information for the Fair Housing Council of Riverside County and the California Department of Public Health, Indoor Air Quality Section is located on page 2 of this handout.

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**OFFICES IN: RIVERSIDE, BLYTHE, CORONA, HEMET, INDIO, MURRIETA AND PALM SPRINGS**

**For more information call (888) 722-4234**

**Department Web Site – [www.rivcoeh.org](http://www.rivcoeh.org)**

For Renter/Landlord disputes, contact the Fair Housing Council of Riverside County, Inc.:

Website: <http://fairhousing.net/>

Phone: 1-800-655-1812

Email: [fhcrc@fairhousing.net](mailto:fhcrc@fairhousing.net)

For general mold information and guidance on hiring an Indoor Air Quality consultant, refer to the California Department of Public Health:

Website: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/PROGRAMS/IAQ/Pages/IndoorMold.aspx>

Email: [iaq@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:iaq@cdph.ca.gov)

\*Document available in an alternate format upon request

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