

**TITLE****Mold: Should I Be Concerned?****DATE**

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**ABSTRACT**

If you have mold in your basement, your garage, or even inside your house, it could give you mild allergy attacks, or it could be far more dangerous. Know whether you should be concerned—and how to get rid of it.

**BODY**

Good news! Since there are 100,000 types of mold, it's not unusual to find it in your yard or house, but most people have no problem living with it. [1A, 2A and 2B] In fact, don't be surprised if there's mold both inside and outside your house. [1B and 2C] Inside your house, mold may grow in moist environments like basements or bathrooms; outside, mold is found in dirt, on plants—it's even present in compost piles. [1B]

While most people show no mold-related symptoms, some people who have allergies do have reactions such as sneezing, coughing, or irritated skin. [1A and 2D] Also, if you have asthma, mold might trigger an attack. [1A] On rare occasions, mold can cause extreme symptoms such as seizures and difficulty breathing. [1C and 2A] Because the allergic reaction to mold is not well understood, it makes sense to do your best to control mold and mildew in your home whether or not you have symptoms. [1D and 2E] The following eight tips will help you minimize mold in your environment:

1. Reduce humidity. [1E and 2I] Using a dehumidifier can help reduce moisture in the air. [1E] Monitor humidity and strive to keep it below 50 percent; in fact, some experts recommend a humidity level as low as 30 to 40 percent. [1E and 2I]
2. Keep your filters clean! [2J] Dehumidifiers, though helpful in controlling humidity, need to be cleaned regularly. [1E, 2I, and 2J]
3. Keep your eyes open! Most mold is greenish-black, although rarely, mold can be pure black. [1K] If you see even a small amount of mold or mildew on something—for instance, on a shower curtain—the item should be cleaned or thrown away. [1D, 1F, 2G, and 2H] If you decide to clean it, mix dishwashing soap with water, use protective gloves, and wash the mold away. [2F] If you are experiencing allergic symptoms, you should wear a protective mask while you're cleaning. [2F]
4. Take a whiff! [1I] If your home smells musty, that may indicate a mold problem, even if you can't see it. [1I] Check out hidden areas. [1I] You may need to look behind wall coverings such as wallpaper or paneling or under carpets to find the mold. [1J and 2G] If you see mold on wall coverings or rugs, probably you should throw the item away. [2G and 2H] If you think you have a mold, but can't

- find it, talk to an allergist who'll be able to advise you as to whether you should have your house inspected, and if so, how you should proceed. [1L and 2B]
5. Disinfect basements, bathroom walls, and other damp areas. [1B and 1G] A solution made up diluted bleach works well. [1G]
  6. Repair leaks promptly and dry out areas that are damp with a fan or by wiping the area down. [2G and 2H]
  7. Seal areas vulnerable to leaking to avoid introducing dampness into the environment. [2G]
  8. Keep the air moving! [1H and 2H] If possible, open doors and windows to allow fresh air to flow into the house. [1H] Use fans to increase air circulation. [1H and 2H]

But don't forget—most people have no sensitivity to mold! [1A]

**Sources:**

- 1.) "Mold exposure." Mayo Clinic Website. October 2002.
- 2.) "Out With the MOLD, In With the New: AAAAI offers tips for eliminating mold in homes and businesses." AAAAI.org Website. May 2003.