Mold and Allergy Resources

Knowledge is power! The more you know, the more you can be the best advocate for your own health.

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services: Health Effects of Indoor Mold

- http://epi.publichealth.nc.gov/oii/mold/healtheffects.html

Environmental Protection Agency: Asthma Triggers

- http://www.epa.gov/asthma/triggers.html

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology

- http://www.aaaai.org/home.aspx

BeAllergyWise.com: 12 Tips for Managing Seasonal Allergies

- http://www.beallergywise.com/articles/managing-seasonal-allergies/

WebMD: links to allergy and asthma information

- http://www.webmd.com

Vision

- To be your preferred healthcare organization.

Mission

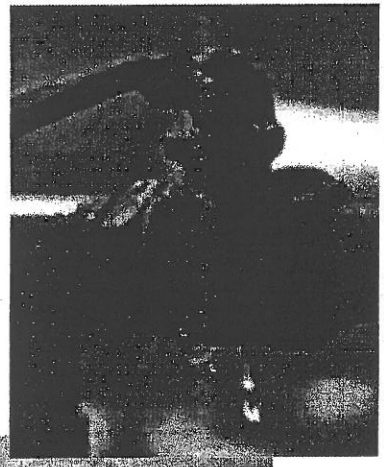
- To provide safe, efficient, effective patient and family centered health care while ensuring operational readiness.

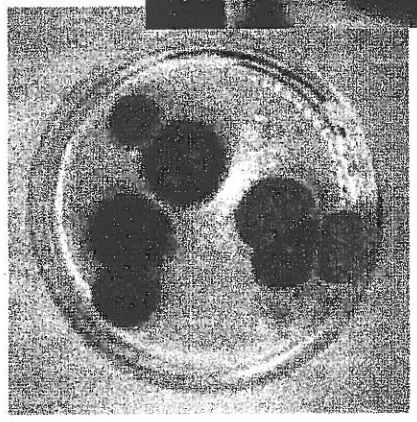
Guiding Principles

- We are the face of Navy Medicine
- We are one command working as an integrated team
- We are collectively accountable for mission accomplishment
- We actively embrace process improvement opportunities and ensure a culture of patient safety
- We are good stewards of resources: people, space, dollars, environment, and external partnerships

"Always Caring"
Since April 29, 1949

Naval Hospital Beaufort





Mold 101

Mold 101

MOLD AND HEALTH: KNOWLEDGE IS POWER!

Mold is everywhere, not just in Beaufort. Mold is quite capable of sustaining itself anyplace in the world where there is moisture and a food source, which includes:

- Wood
- Wallpaper
- Upholstery
- Dust

According to both the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), there are two basic rules of thumb for handling mold:

- Control the source of moisture
- Clean or remove mold contaminated surfaces

There are over 100,000 species of mold and currently there are no legal limits established for sampling to determine if the level of mold in a building or home is acceptable or not.

Great information about mold is readily available at reputable sites like www.epa.gov/mold/ *or* www.cdc.gov/mold/faqs.htm.

WHAT ARE COMMON SOURCES OF EXCESS MOISTURE?

Common sources of excess moisture include:

- Air conditioning set so low condensate appears on windows
- Leaving windows open with the air conditioning on
- Rainwater leaking through faulty gutters or a damaged roof
- A foundation leak
- Plumbing or sewage system leaks inside a structure
- Improperly ventilated showers, kitchens, and laundry rooms
- Steam-cleaning carpets and not extracting most of the water
- Spills on soft surfaces that aren't cleaned immediately
- Wet towels or laundry left on floors or carpets
- Overflowing air conditioning drip pans

Studies have shown that mold can grow on building materials, such as plywood, that are wet for 48-72 hours.

WHAT IS THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE IN MOLD TREATMENT?

The #1 way to prevent mold growth is to control moisture! Tips for managing mold include:

- If you see signs of water damage or leaks, or experience flooding, make repairs immediately or contact the facilities maintenance department
- Check your building after heavy rains and flooding for damage or sources of water intrusion
- When you see mold, clean it up right away
- Conduct routine housekeeping – this removes dust and other sources of mold "food"
- Use a vacuum with a filter – this keeps dust and mold spores from getting back into the air
- Avoid dry sweeping and using feather dusters – these cleaning methods generally just re-introduce dust and mold spores back into the air

How you clean mold will depend on a variety of factors, such as, whether the surface is hard (like floor tile) or soft (like furniture). Some items that cannot be fully cleaned may have to be discarded.

Both the CDC and EPA websites have great guidance for cleaning mold and how to determine when you might need assistance with bigger problems.

ISN'T MOLD GOING TO MAKE ME SICK?

Not necessarily. Just because mold is present, doesn't mean it will make you sick. According to the CDC, fewer than 500 mold species have been described as human pathogens that can cause infections. Individual factors that contribute to how susceptible a person is to mold as an allergen include:

- General health
- Age
- Pre-existing conditions, such as asthma

Only a medical provider can determine if an actual allergy to a specific mold exists the same way they would determine if you are allergic to your cat, oak pollen, or grass.

Additionally, there are many environmental causes other than mold that can lead to respiratory illnesses or act as respiratory irritants, including:

- Air fresheners and other perfumes
- Scented candles
- Tobacco smoke
- Pet dander
- Household dust
- Household cleaning products

It is also important to use cleaning products properly; don't mix them together and, in this case, less is more because the vapors from excessive cleaning products can irritate the respiratory tract.

WHAT ELSE COULD BE MAKING ME FEEL ILL?

In the Tri-Command area, there are a wide variety of pollens in the air due to the high humidity/moisture and the lush vegetation in the area. Websites, such as, http://www.weather.com or www.accuweather.com display grass pollen, tree pollen, dust, and dander maps, which provide reports of these common respiratory irritants and recommendations for reducing them indoors.

Seasonal colds and flu, which are exacerbated by weather and passed around within the office space or the home, can also be the cause of respiratory illnesses. Anyone experiencing a respiratory illness should seek care from their health care provider to identify the specific health conditions or allergy that is causing the illness and receive appropriate treatment.

OUT WITH THE MOLD!

By performing proper moisture control and clean up of mold, you will reduce mold growth in the home and work environments.

Using information from this brochure and the sites listed will help you to minimize the health effects from other environmental sources and may ultimately help you and your health care provider pinpoint the cause of individual illness or discomfort.

Once environmental factors are better controlled and any allergies or underlying medical conditions are treated, hopefully you will breathe easier — literally.