MOULD: PREVENTION, REMEDIATION & RESPONSIBILITIES

INTRODUCTION

Mould will silently damage any structure it infests and cause harm to human health. In this comprehensive guide, students will find essential information, facts and guidelines on the following:

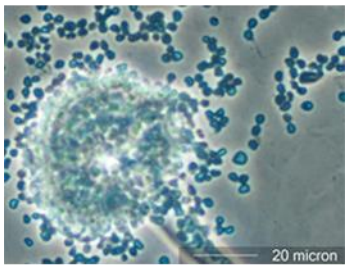
- ✓ What mould is and the conditions it needs to grow
- ✓ The damage mould causes
- ✓ When mould must be treated
- ✓ When mould requires specialist mould removal services
- ✓ Who is responsible for mould removal
- ✓ How to remove mould permanently

MOULD AND THE CONDITIONS IT THRIVES IN

Mould is the common term for fungi, a microorganism which includes around 300,000 different species. Mould thrives in any damp environment that is poorly ventilated; the surfaces it grows on provide its food source. 'Fuzzy' patches of black, green, brown, yellow or pink are usually accompanied by an unpleasant odour that won't go away. Moulds reproduce by releasing spores which produce toxic substances known as mycotoxins. Airborne spores are able to survive in harsh circumstances; the spores settle on a surface and remain there until conditions trigger mould growth. Once mould has infiltrated, its growth will continue unless the environment is altered and it is dealt with effectively.

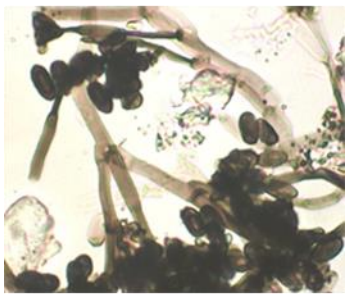
ASPERGILLUS

A genus of fungi that causes a wide variety of diseases, particularly in individuals with compromised immune systems or respiratory issues. Aspergillus primarily affects the



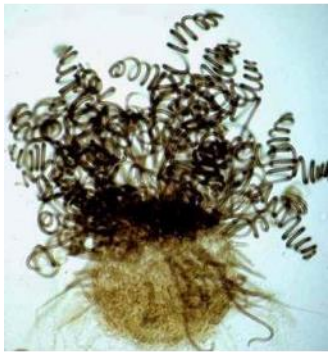
STACHYBOTRYS

A toxic indoor mould found on natural and man-made substrates that produces mycotoxins causing stachybotrytoxicosis and other conditions in humans.



CHAETOMIUM

A common contaminant mould that causes infections in humans. Mature colonies are grey to olive coloured, emits a musty odour, found on water-damaged drywall.



HOW MOULD WILL DAMAGE PROPERTY

Mould causes damage to the fabric of a building **impairing structural integrity**. The problem is not confined to visible mould; usually the mould you can see indicates a far more serious problem; mould growth will be in places that you are unable to see. Mould breaks down organic matter as its source of food. The longer mould and its causes are left untreated; the more damage will be caused.

HOW MOULD WILL DAMAGE HEALTH

In 2001 mould was classed as a **Category 1 health risk** by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), the same category as asbestos. Moulds can be classed according to the severity of the risks:

- **Hazard class A:** Directly hazardous, toxin producing and high risk of infection
- **Hazard class B:** Linked to allergic reactions, particularly with prolonged exposure
- **Hazard class C:** Main damage is structural

Mould produces airborne spores which are carried on clothing, footwear and belongings. The spores enter your respiratory system via inhalation. Research into the harmful effects of mould has been carried out for many years.

The severity of the health effects will depend upon:

- Length of exposure
- Type of mould
- Amount of mould
- Sensitivity to the mould

Health effects include: fungal respiratory infections, breathing difficulties, asthma and rhinitis, the issues are far more serious for anyone with compromised immunity. More information on the health effects of mould is available on the [NHS website] http://www.nhs.uk/chq/Pages/Can-damp-and-mould-affect-my-health.aspx?CategoryID=87

WHEN TO DEAL WITH MOULD

To gauge the scale of the problem you are experiencing, mould can be categorised according to size.

- **Level 1** – total surface area less than 1 square metre
- **Level 2** – total surface area between 1 and 10 square metres
- **Level 3** – total surface area greater than 10 square metres
- **Level 4** – contamination within Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning system

Mould of level 3 or above should only be treated by a professional mould removal company.

Call a professional, experienced mould remediation company if the mould is:

- Caused by water that could be contaminated
- Spans an area greater than 10 square metres
- Within your HVAC system
- Persistent
- Potentially infiltrating areas of the building that cannot be seen

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MOULD REMOVAL?

Whilst a landlord has a duty of care, the issue of mould is complex. The landlord is responsible if the problem is structural, caused by leaking pipes or faulty damp proofing. The tenant is responsible if the mould is caused by condensation due to lack of heat or poor ventilation (windows not being open enough etc.). The onus is on the tenant to prove the cause of the mould.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR PROPERTY OWNERS AND TENNANTS

Establish the extent of the mould infestation. If mould is left untreated or treated incorrectly, the scale of the problem will dramatically increase. Identify the cause/source of the mould. If the excess moisture is brought about by water that potentially contains sewage or other contamination **DO NOT TREAT IT YOURSELF**, contact a professional mould remediation company.

Step 1 – Identify the source of the mould and get it fixed – the only way to prevent its return

Step 2 - Wear Personal Protective Equipment e.g. Goggles, long rubber gloves, mask

Step 3 – Ensure the area is well ventilated

Step 4 – Remove irreparable flooring and furnishings and dispose of it correctly

Step 5 – Wipe/scrub mould off surfaces using a solution of 1-part bleach to four parts water

Step 6 – Dry thoroughly with a clean cloth and dispose of contaminated cloths

Step 7 – Clean, vacuum and disinfect all surfaces within room

Your time at university is possibly a once in a lifetime opportunity. To make the most of it, you need to be happy and healthy. If mould is dealt with quickly and effectively, the health problems it causes are entirely preventable. Put yourself in the strongest position to succeed by living in a healthy environment.