# MOLD

Mold is a term for a group of micro-organisms that belong to the Fungi kingdom. They are present in all environments on earth and typically are involved with the breakdown of dead or decaying plants and animals. While they are present at low levels everywhere, when they grow to excessive levels they can cause adverse health effects. Because many construction and household materials contain wood they can grow in any building. In all places, the conditions for mold to grow are always present, except sufficient water. For this reason, the control of water is essential for the prevention of excess mold growth.
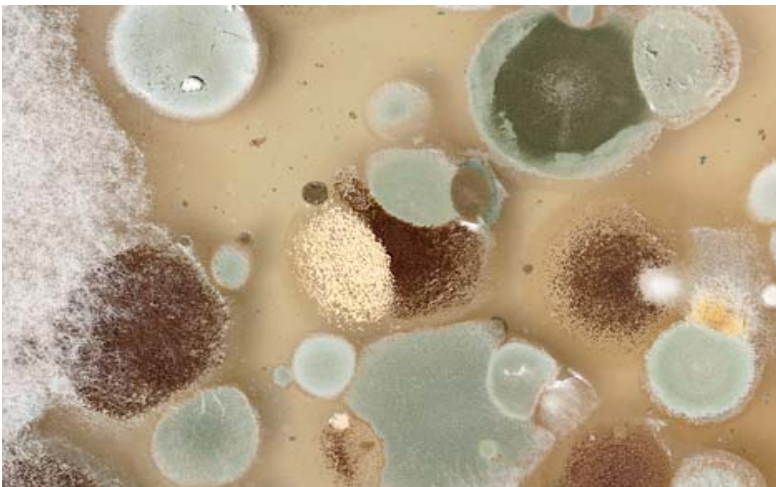
Mold may be white, gray, brown, black, yellow, green pink, orange and even blue depending on what organic matter it is breaking down or what climate or region of the world it lives in.

There are no regulations directly regulating the presence of mold growth in homes or other buildings. In most cases, if visible mold growth is present, sampling is unnecessary. Since no EPA or other federal limits have been set for mold or mold spores, sampling cannot be used to check a building's compliance with federal mold standards. As of July 28, 2015, The New York State Department of Labor (NYS DOL) has regulations for the licensing of consultants and contractors that perform mold surveys and mold remediation projects and requirements for how those assessments and remediation's must be performed.

The most common health effects caused by exposure to mold spores and particles in the air are respiratory effects like eye irritation, sneezing, congestion and allergic reaction symptoms, for those that have them. Other more serious respiratory reactions and infections can occur in very old and young and individuals and those with compromised immune systems (transplant recipients and those on immune system suppressing drugs).

- Maintain the outside of the building in good condition, especially the roof, as it is the presence of water leaks that most often lead to excess mold growth.

- Regularly inspect the outside and inside of the building for water leaks or water staining. If you see a water leak or staining act quickly to eliminate or control it. Once the leak is eliminated, have the impacted materials cleaned, if possible, or removed and replaced. If you are not able to do the work yourself hire a licensed mold remediation contractor to perform the work. It takes approximately 2 to 3 days for visible mold growth to start after a water leak.

- Regularly inspect plumbing and the areas where sinks, tubs and toilets are located to assure they are not leaking. If you identify a leak quickly turn off the water supply to the fixture and have the leak quickly repaired and the damaged materials replaced.

- Use an inexpensive temperature and relative humidity unit to monitor the relative humidity in your home, especially in occupied basement areas, as excess relative humidity (above 60% for several days) can act as a water source to allow excess mold growth to occur. Watch for condensation on the inside of windows which is a sign of high relative humidity. If an area is found to have excess humidity, use a dehumidifier to lower the humidity below 60%.

- Use storage containers that are made of mold resistant materials, like plastic, and avoid cardboard.

- When installing new building materials consider mold resistant products like paperless sheetrock, metal wall studs, cement wall board, for wet areas, etc.
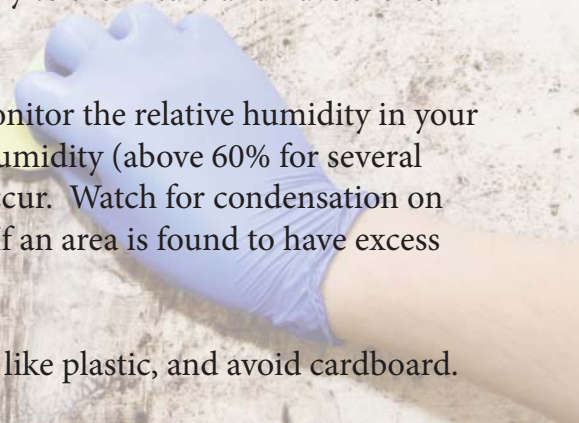
## For more information and resources visit:

# www.cseany.org/osh

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