

Beyond the dark spots and the musty smells

Keeping you safe from Mould

Moulds can be beneficial to our lives. Think of your favourite mushroom, life-saving antibiotics or the yeast that makes our bread. For the most part, it's a completely harmless micro-organism that not only helps our ecosystem evolve, but has been known to save lives. But do you know how to spot the good mould from the bad? Do you know how to keep yourself safe from its potential impact on your lungs, skin and eyes?

We do.

That's why we've spent decades giving you the information you need to spot potential risks while improving respiratory protection products that help keep you out of harm's way. Because no matter whether you work in the construction industry or are tackling mould in your own home - it's never worth jeopardizing your health and that of your loved ones. Here's an overview of what you need to know about mould to help you steer clear of its harmful side effects.



Magnification of Mould

What is Mould?

Mould is an overarching term that's used to refer to a large group of over 1.5 million different micro-organism spanning everything from yeast, to penicillin and toxic black mould. It can be found both indoors and outdoors, but needs a few key conditions to grow and expand: warmth, moisture and organic matter so it can get to work degrading and decaying.

Mould reproduces by forming a large number of spores, which can become airborne and spread through insects, animals, wind, water and human activity. Risks surface when you inhale significant quantities of particularly harmful types of mould, such as Stachybotrys, Aspergillus and Toxicogenic Moulds.

How could it affect me?

The risks of exposure to mould are difficult to evaluate and are directly linked to a person's health and respiratory issues before exposure. For those with pre-existing conditions, including asthma, allergies or immune-suppressant illnesses, mould can pose a very serious threat. The body recognizes the mould as an allergen which triggers an immune system response. This can lead to wheezing, chest tightness, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, as well as fungal and lung infections.

Depending on a person's susceptibility, age, state of health and level of exposure, they could also fall prey to allergy-like symptoms including a runny nose, irritated eyes, congestion, headaches, fatigue and skin rashes.

When am I at risk?

Mould can grow in any number of places where conditions are ripe: in basements, bathrooms, pipes, roofs, construction sites, summer cottages, antique shops or flood sites. You're especially at risk if you have a pre-existing lung condition or sensitivity to allergies, but long-term exposure to high mould levels can be risky for anyone - notably for children and the elderly. Mould levels tend to be particularly high in places that have been flooded and in which organic construction materials such as wood or drywall have been left in humid conditions to decay.

Given how widespread and diverse mould can be, government entities have been unable to establish clear safe exposure levels. That's why we recommend that anyone, especially those with a known sensitivity to respiratory issues wear [protective gear](#) whenever they're coming in direct contact with high concentrations of airborne mould.

What can I do to protect myself?

Control humidity levels

Industry standards recommend that humidity levels go no higher than 50% throughout the day. Air conditioners and dehumidifiers can go a long way in controlling humidity levels both in homes and across construction sites. The market also offers cleaning products specifically meant to fight and remove mould, which can have a significant impact in areas like bathrooms and basements. Finally, try to avoid carpeting in damp areas like the basement, and remove any previously soaked wood, carpets or upholstery.

Get the equipment you need

For higher exposure levels or respiratory sensitivity, 3M has a full line of products ranging from lightweight disposable respirators to powered respiratory equipment. All of our products are equipped with advanced electrostatic media technology to let you breathe comfortably while keeping dangerous spores at bay.

You can always [get in touch](#) with one of our respiratory experts for personalized guidance on protective gear and how to evaluate risk. By properly understanding and identifying your exposure risks, you can put your mind at ease and know that we're helping you safeguard your health and that of those you love.

References

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