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## Molds

We are frequently asked about mold and mildew. Mildew attaches itself to living plant organisms and cannot survive in an interior setting. Molds, however, are a different story. In nature, molds are designed to break down dead organic matter, which then provides a food source for plants.

Mold spores are everywhere. Of the thousands of molds, only three cause the vast majority of health problems; *Stachybotrys* a/k/a “Black mold” (stack-e-bott-russ), *Aspergillus* (asper-jill-us) and *Penicillium* (the base for the drug Penicillin).

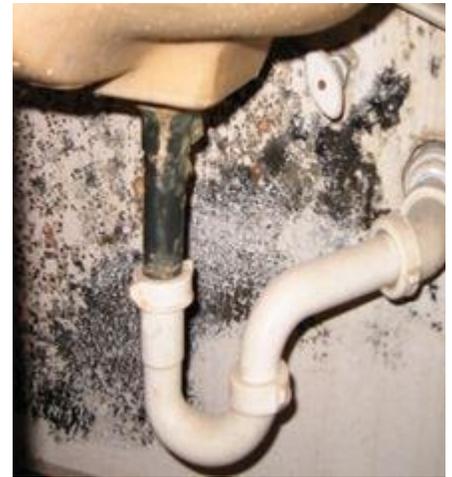
The musty odor associated with mold is a self-defense mechanism. Molds release mycotoxins to prevent competing molds from infringing on their food source. These mycotoxins are the source of our allergic reactions. If you look closely at mold, you will see concentrated areas of mold separated by small areas or lines of unaffected areas. This is the ‘battle line’ between different mold colonies.

Molds need four things to thrive:

- 1) A moisture source, such as a leak, or high humidity (60% or more)
- 2) Temperatures between 72° - 95° F.
- 3) A dead organic food source (paper, dust, sloughed skin, natural fibers, wood, etc)
- 4) Stagnant air, which allows the spores to “take root” and then grow on a food source.

If you take away any one of these factors, mold will go dormant until all 4 are back in play. With these four factors in place, molds can start growing in as little as 48 hours depending on the category. The higher the category, the quicker they will develop.

Water damage is broken down into 3 categories. Category 1 is fresh, clean water such as from a municipality treated source. Category 2 is lightly contaminated or ‘gray’ water such as from a washing machine or shower overflow. Category 3 is highly contaminated water such as sewer back up, salt water or flood water. Category 1 water will deteriorate to Category 3 over time. This is why it is important to address the problem quickly.



In our water damage work, we use air movers and dehumidifiers to move the air and reduce the humidity levels. If you have a water loss, **do NOT turn off the equipment**. It will prolong the drying process and could make the situation much worse by creating a haven for mold growth.

If a structure is to remain unoccupied for an extended period of time, I recommend the air handler remain ON rather than AUTO to prevent stagnant or stale air contributing to a potential mold problem.

Mighty Mac limits its work to water extraction and structural drying. We do NOT do any mold remediation, demolition or construction work.

See the tab for the “E.P.A. Mold Guide” for more information. There is also a wealth of information online. If you have any questions, please let us know.