

# **TEXAS REGIONAL ASTHMA AND ALLERGY CENTER, L.L.P.**

*Board Certified specialists in allergy, asthma, immunology, and respiratory disorders*

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## **INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE AVOIDANCE OF MOLDS**

Molds are everywhere! They will grow on almost anything that has sufficient moisture. Molds, also called mildew, are common around the house and can be recognized as the growth that occurs on spoiled fruit or old cheese in the refrigerator. It may also appear on shower curtains, in shower stalls, on stored books and leather goods, in damp basements, storage areas, under leaves, in the grass and in cultivated gardens. Molds produce spores or seeds, which are very light and about the size of pollen grains. They can be spread by air currents inside or outside the house. These spores are the major source of trouble for the individual who is allergic to mold.

### Mold control can be accomplished by the following:

1. Use a dehumidifier in damp weather.
2. Correct all areas of seepage or flooding which may occur after heavy rains.
3. Make sure that concrete walls are made as waterproof as possible with appropriate repairs and use of "Sta-Dri" or other appropriate paint.
4. Keep refrigerators clean: dispose of food that has spoiled
5. Keep walls of shower stalls, ceilings, curtains and doors wiped clean with Lysol or Clorox. Any walls that can be covered with plastic sheets will be much easier to clean and be kept clean and free of mold.
6. Keep closets aired or ventilated, or use a drying agent hung in the closet, especially storage closets. Moth preventatives are not sufficient for prevention of mold growth.

All of the previous measures are designed to minimize contact with molds in the air. These measures are an adjunct in therapy, along with the administration of mold antigen as a vaccine. Avoidance of contact with mold is an integral part of the treatment, and while the vaccines are effective, excessive contact may make good results much more difficult to obtain.

Not all mold is airborne. Some molds can be found in foods that are prepared by the help of mold activity. In other instances the mold may appear as a contaminant. Aged cheeses are a common source of mold, and molds are used in the preparation of wines, beer, breads, and cakes: these are also called yeast. Molds may contaminate foods that constantly exposed such as potatoes, onions, fruits, etc.

### Other Hints:

1. Watch out for old stuffed furniture and old mattresses: even old foam rubber may harbor molds.
2. Beware of the summer cottage that has been closed up.
3. Watch for molds in potted plants in the house and in cut flowers brought in from the garden.
4. Watch for mold in stored foods.

### **MOLDS**

#### **ALTERNARIA**

This type of mold spore is very common in the air from late spring into fall, especially from noon until 3pm daily. The fungus grows on organic debris in the soil and as parasitizes leaves, stems, flowers, fruits, and many vegetables, cereal grains, and ornamental plants (such as tomato, bean, chrysanthemum and cabbage).

**ASPERGILLUS**

This is a common soil fungus, and also grows on stored food products under damp conditions. One species is common on wet surfaces in bathrooms and in drip pans of refrigerators and other appliances.

**CURVULARIA**

This fungus is a common parasite of grasses, and the spores are easily dispersed into the air by lawn mowing activity. In nature, the highest concentration of spores in the air occurs in the early afternoon.

**HELMINTHOSPORIUM/DRECHLERA**

These spores are fairly common in the air, especially those produced by leaf parasites of grasses and cereal grains. Grain threshing operations release large quantities of these spores into the air. The daily peak spore production in nature is around 2pm.

**CLADOSPORIODES**

This type of spore is very common in the air, sometimes making up half of the total spore count. The highest levels occur from mid-summer through December, and the daily peak of spore counts is between 11am and 3pm. The fungus grows on organic debris in the soil and on dead leaves; it may also parasitize living leaves of some plants.

**PENICILLIUM**

Colonies of this fungus are often blue or green in color, and may be seen on food or other organic materials (citrus fruits, jams, bread, apples, leather) in the home. The spores are plentiful inside houses during the winter, and show up at the highest levels around 2pm.

**EPICOCCUM**

Epicoccum is normally a soil organism and can often be found on decaying vegetative material, plant leaves and uncooked fruit. Allergic Importance: epicoccum elicits an allergenic response in a moderate number of mold-sensitive patients. Epicoccum sensitive patients appear to have increased symptoms in the late summer and fall.

**FUSARIUM**

Fusarium spores are often produced in a slimy mass, and require water splashing for their dispersal, thus they may be especially common in the air after a rain. Many Fusarium species are parasitic on vegetable and field crops, and spores may be released from infected grasses and cereals and from stored fruits and vegetables such as cucumbers, tomatoes and potatoes.

**MUCOR**

Mucor is a normal soil inhabitant. It is frequently found around barns and barnyards where it grows on animal waste. It is widespread in nature.

**PHOMA**

Phoma grows readily on paper products such as books and magazines. It also grows on certain paints and green plants. Allergic importance: extract of Phoma frequently produce skin reactions in mold-sensitive patients. It is widespread in nature and isolated frequently from air samples.

**PULLULARIA**

This fungus is common on wet, decaying wood, and produces large numbers of spores during the summer months.

**RHIZOPUS**

This fungus is a common saprophyte growing on organic debris in soil and on sugary food products in storage, i.e. bakery goods, fruits and sweet potatoes.