RENTER'S GUIDE TO MOLD

WHAT IS MOLD?

Mold refers to many forms of fungi that are found naturally in the environment in places such as soil and on dead and decaying matter. It comes in a variety of colors, such as green, black, white, brown and orange. It appears fuzzy or in slimy streaks. There is often a musty or earthy odor around molds.

WHAT CAUSES MOLD TO GROW INSIDE HOMES?

Some molds release tiny spores, just as some plants produce seeds. They need moisture and a food source. Indoors, mold spores move through the air and settle on surfaces. When mold spores land on a damp spot, they may begin to grow and multiply.

Good food sources for molds are cloth, wood, wallboard and insulation, but molds can grow on almost anything. When there is a wet surface or material that is not dried or discarded promptly (for example, water discharged from a burst pipe), molds can grow within 24 to 48 hours in the area.

HOW CAN MOLD AFFECT MY HEALTH?

Mold does not affect all people, however certain people may be sensitive to mold, particularly those with allergies or asthma. Sensitive people may experience symptoms that include:

- Runny nose
- Scratchy throat
- Itchy eyes
- Sneezing, and in more severe cases, wheezing and coughing.
- Skin rash and itching

If you think you have symptoms related to exposure to molds, you should see your doctor.

WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT MOLD IN MY HOME?

The key to prevent mold in your home is to control moisture, such as a leaking roof, and resolve that issue. However, there are some things you, as the renter, can do to help reduce the health effects from mold:

- Keep the humidity level in the home below 60%, ideally between 30% and 50%.
- Use exhaust fans or open windows to ventilate while cooking and showering.
- Keep bathrooms dry and well ventilated.
- Clean, dry or remove anything from your home that is water damaged within 24 to 48 hours.

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WHAT ARE THE BASIC MOLD CLEAN-UP STEPS?

1. Fix plumbing leaks and other water problems as soon as possible.

2. Scrub mold off hard surfaces with detergent and water.

3. Dry all materials completely.

4. When cleaning, consider the following:

   - Avoid breathing mold spores, getting them in your eyes, or on your skin.

   - Routine use of chlorine bleach is not necessary or recommended. Some situations may require it, however, so use good judgment to decide if you need it.

   - Consult a specialist if you are unsure about how to clean an item, if it is expensive, or if it has sentimental value. Specialists in repair and restoration of water damaged household items are commonly listed in phone directories. Look for specialists who are affiliated with professional organizations and be sure to check references.

5. **Note:** Dead mold may still cause allergic reactions in some people, and therefore may also need to be removed.

6. Absorbent materials may have to be thrown away if they become moldy. Mold can grow in the empty spaces of porous materials, so it may not be removed completely.

More information about clean-up and prevention is available from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency at *www.epa.gov/mold* and your county University of Georgia Cooperative Extension agent at (800) ASK-UGA1, and at https://www.fcs.uga.edu/extension/mold-safety.

AS A RENTER, WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

More information for renters about mold, moisture problems, and the *Georgia Landlord Tenant Handbook* can be found at https://dca.ga.gov/sites/default/files/georgia_landlord-tenant_handbook.pdf. This handbook is designed to address common residential landlord-tenant issues and defines the role of the landlord and tenant during these issues. Additional information is available from the Georgia Apartments Association at www.ga-apt.org.

The Landlord-Tenant Hotline is no longer available to renters; however the hotline recommends using https://www.georgialegalaid.org/ for additional information about renting in Georgia. Some areas may also be able to provide assistance through local housing code enforcement. Contact city or county officials to find out if there are housing codes applicable in your area.