



MOLD

A Fact Sheet for the Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon

Q. What is mold?

A. Mold is another name for fungi. Fungi can be found throughout the world and are essential for their ability to break down waste organic matter. Fungi come in many shapes including mushrooms, puffballs, slimes, etc. Most molds, however, are associated with the fuzzy material that appears on fruits, bread, and damp surfaces. There are thousands of types of fungi.

Q. Why should I be concerned with mold?

A. Some fungi can give off volatile organic chemicals (VOCs) and spores that can be irritating or may cause allergic reactions in individuals. Persons with asthma and other respiratory ailments are at greatest risk.

Q. What are normal levels of mold?

A. Due to the wide variety in individual responses to mold exposures, there is no conclusive information regarding safe levels of the molds commonly found in indoor environments. Since there is no nationally recognized standard method for the collection and identification of airborne molds, there are no well defined "normal levels" of mold. Most people live day in and day out without any adverse reaction to the types of molds that may be encountered inside and outside of buildings.

Q. Should I test for mold?

A. There is no statutory requirement to test for mold. However, if you suspect that mold is present, testing may be appropriate.

Q. How do I know whether mold is present?

A. If mold is present, it is often observable. Indicators of mold are mold-like odors, saturated building materials, visible staining of building materials, and visible mold growth.

Q. What if I want to test for mold?

A. Testing for mold beyond the indicators involves sampling of the suspected materials. Any mold testing at Archdiocesan parish/school facilities should be coordinated with the Archdiocesan Property Office and conducted by a qualified environmental company.

Q. What should be done if mold is found in a building?

A. Whenever mold is encountered in an indoor setting, it should be cleaned up. Minor occurrences of mold may be removed by washing the affected area with a cleaning solution that contains bleach. Larger occurrences of mold may require removal of the contaminated building materials. The Oregon Department of Health and the Environmental Protection Agency maintain web sites that contain information regarding the identification and cleanup of mold-contaminated building materials.

Q. Whom should I contact if I have further questions about mold?

A. **Contact:**

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