Health Effects of Mold Exposure

**ALLERGIC REACTIONS**

- **Dermatitis** – Red itchy skin and/or rash.
- **Asthma** – May be aggravated or caused by exposure to mold, resulting in acute attacks of coughing, wheezing, and shortness of breath. Reactions usually occur within minutes after exposure, and may repeat 6-10 hours later.

**ALLERGIC RHINITIS OR SINUSITIS** – Similar to hay fever or the common cold, but over an extended period of time. Symptoms include a runny nose, nasal or sinus congestion, irritated or red eyes, irritated or scratchy throat, and cough. Reactions occur quickly after exposure to molds.

**HYPERSENSITIVITY PNEUMONITIS** (extrinsic allergic alveolitis) – Involves the lungs and body. Symptoms include tightness in the chest, difficulty breathing, cough, fever, and muscle aches. Reactions occur 6-8 hours after exposure. **RARE**

**OTHER EFFECTS**

Reported symptoms in damp buildings include fatigue, headache, fever, muscle ache, difficulty concentrating and mood changes. The cause of these symptoms is not completely understood.

**FUNGAL INFECTIONS**

- **Invasive pulmonary aspergillosis** – Only occurs in the severely immunocompromised. Symptoms include pneumonia plus fever, bone pain, chills, headache, and weight loss. **RARE**
- **Aspergilloma (formed in a pre-existing healed lung abscess)** – Symptoms include cough, coughing up blood, and weight loss. **RARE**
- **Allergic Bronchopulmonary Aspergillosis (ABPA)** – Worsening of underlying condition (asthma or cystic fibrosis) plus coughing up blood and weight loss. **RARE**

Workers with a higher likelihood of mold-related illness include those who:

- Have other allergies
- Have existing respiratory conditions including asthma or other lung diseases
- Are moderately immunocompromised (such as diabetic) or severely immunocompromised (have AIDS or leukemia, receiving chemotherapy, or are organ transplant recipients)
- Are elderly

**SOURCE:**
California Dept. of Health Services
California Dept. of Industrial Relations