



# Health Effects of Mold Exposure

## ALLERGIC REACTIONS

**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*

## 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*

## 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.

**Most people will have no reaction at all when exposed to molds.**

### 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