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## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT BLACK MOLD (STACHYBOTRYS)**

### **What is black mold?**

Stachybotrys chartarum (also known as “Stachybotrys atra”, “Stachybotrys alternans,” “toxic black mold,” or “Stacky”) is a greenish-black fungus that can grow on fiberboards, gypsum boards, thermal insulation, paper, ceiling tiles, drywalls, ducts, wood, dust, wet leaves, among other items. Black mold, as well as other molds can be hidden in ceilings, walls, or floors without being seen. Black mold is not found on plastic, vinyl, ceramic tiles, bread, or between bathroom tiles. Growth occurs in areas of excessive moisture caused by water damage, high humidity, water leaks, condensation, or flooding. Black mold tends to develop one to two weeks after moisture intrusion. Other common molds usually develop over one to two days.



### **Are black molds considered toxic?**

Black is a very common color for mold. If you observe mold that is black in color, this does not imply that it is black mold or toxic.

### **What are the health effects from exposure to black mold?**

Some people are more affected by mold than others. Health effects depend on the specific toxin, the amount of exposure, and one’s sensitivity to mold. Exposure to black mold results in the same health effects caused by exposure to other common molds. Health effects may include upper respiratory problems (coughing, wheezing, aggravation of asthma, runny nose, irritation of the eyes or throat), skin rash, aches and pains, fatigue, and inability to concentrate. Symptoms usually lessen once mold is removed.

### **Are infants more prone to health risks from exposure to black mold?**

Infants are particularly sensitive to the health effects (stated above) of mold exposure because of their smaller size and growing bodies. In studies linking black mold with lung bleeding, infants were continually exposed to high levels of black (and other) molds in highly contaminated homes over a long period of time. Environments contaminated with black mold are not healthy for infants or children.

### **Is there a medical test to determine whether I have been exposed to black mold or other molds?**

The radioallergosorbent test (RAST) is a blood test used to determine allergic sensitivity to specific substances, such as mold. This test can measure the immune system's response to mold.

### **How do I know I am exposed to mold in the workplace?**

You may be exposed to mold in the workplace if you have [mold-related symptoms](#) that worsen at work but lessen at home. Some workers may have current health conditions that make them more sensitive to mold. If you see or smell mold, or if you or others are experiencing mold-related symptoms, report the problem to your employer. If possible, consult with an occupational medicine physician to help determine if the symptoms are work-related.

### **Are there any circumstances when people should vacate a home or building because of mold?**

The decision to vacate your home is up to your discretion. If you think you are ill from mold exposure inside your home or workplace, consult your physician to determine the appropriate action to take.

### **Where can I obtain further information?**

- Refer to VDH's [Frequently Asked Questions About Mold](#).
- View a video on Stachybotrys: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGk2\\_jj6VH8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGk2_jj6VH8).
- Contact your healthcare provider if you have concerns about your health and mold exposure.
- Contact your local health department. A directory is located on the webpage at [Local Health Departments](#).

If you need further information regarding the health effects of black mold, please contact the Virginia Department of Health, Division of Environmental Epidemiology, 109 Governor Street, 4th Floor, Richmond, VA 23219, call (804) 864-8182, or email [toxicology@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:toxicology@vdh.virginia.gov).

**Prepared by:** Division of Environmental Epidemiology  
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