

**M**old is the name given to a group of fungi that are commonly found on wet or damp building surfaces. These molds are found in the soil and adapt successfully to grow on a wide variety of construction materials and fabrics.

## How does mold get into a building?

Mold and fungal spores are everywhere. They occur naturally outdoors, need moisture to grow, and gravitate to areas where there is water damage, elevated and prolonged humidity, or dampness. Common sources of excessive indoor moisture that can lead to mold problems include:

- Roof leaks from damaged roofing materials, or blocked gutters;
- Storm-driven rain through window frames, exterior walls, or door assemblies;
- Leaking or broken water pipes, sewer back-ups, or overflows;
- Damp basements due to poorly managed rainwater drainage or inadequate air circulation; and
- Condensation on cold surfaces.

NOTE: In the past, plastic tubing connections to water-cooled equipment in university labs or shops would regularly pop off during non-peak hours due to rising water pressure. Closed-loop cooling baths have replaced the direct connections to water lines preventing flooding and water damage to labs, offices, equipment, and furniture.



## How can mold be prevented?

The key to preventing and stopping indoor mold amplification is to control excessive moisture and condensation.

## What I Need to Do...

- Maintain indoor relative humidity levels below 60%.
- Ensure the ground slopes downward and away from the building foundation.
- Check landscape irrigation to ensure the water spray pattern is not contacting the exterior walls.
- Keep air conditioner drip pans and drain lines clean.
- Ensure cold storage door latches and gaskets are in good condition.
- In case of floods or leaking pipes, remove any standing water promptly.
- Dry out and clean water-damaged materials, or if heavily damaged, remove and replace.
- Discard materials that are wet for more than 48 hours since they are likely to produce mold growth.
- Consult with a commercial restoration company immediately in instances where the water damage is extensive.

It is important to keep the susceptible areas in the building clean and dry. In general, mold will not grow indoors without water, dampness, or excessive moisture. If mold is discovered, contact EH&S ([injuryprevention@usc.edu](mailto:injuryprevention@usc.edu)) to report it.

## References

AIHA "Facts about Mold" <http://bit.do/aiha-mold>

CDC "Facts about Mold and Dampness" [http://www.cdc.gov/mold/dampness\\_facts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/mold/dampness_facts.htm)

US EPA "Mold" <https://www.epa.gov/mold>