Know Your Molds

Mold is in the news because research suggests mold and fungi are adapting to warmer global temperatures, causing more health issues.

Mold is a class of fungi that obtains nutrients from the material on which it lives. It reproduces by producing tiny spores that waft through the indoor and outdoor air. When spores land on a damp spot, they may begin digesting whatever they are growing on.

Mold can be found almost anywhere because it grows on virtually any substance where moisture is present.

Mold affects every person differently, so the health effects from exposure can vary from mild to severe.

This is a simple, practical way to categorize molds and describe their differences.

Allergenic Mold

Not all molds cause allergy symptoms, but inhaling the spores of some mold can cause hypersensitivity reactions in some people.

The resulting symptoms include Itching in the nose, eyes, or throat, sneezing, congestion, or runny nose.

Examples Include:
Alternaria
Aspergillus
Cladosporium
Penicillium
Chaetomium

Some allergenic molds can also be pathogenic or toxic.

Pathogenic Mold

Pathogenic molds (or fungi) are capable of causing certain infections or diseases.

People with weakened immune systems are more susceptible to invasive mold infections. These infections are rare, difficult to diagnose, and potentially very serious.

Examples Include:
Cryptococcus
Histoplasma
Cladosporium

Toxic Mold

Toxic molds are not poisonous, but they produce poisonous chemicals called mycotoxins that are dangerous to humans.

Mycotoxins can cause acute symptoms of severe illness and long-term health effects like immune deficiency.

Examples Include:
Stachybotrys (black mold)
Memnoniella
Aspergillus
Alternaria
Chaetomium