



## Residential Indoor Mold and Residential Mold Air Sample Results What Do They Mean?

FACT SHEET 55-026-0319

The term “mold” is used to refer to fungi that are naturally occurring in the environment. Molds are found in virtually every environment and can be detected, both indoors and outdoors, year round. Mold growth is encouraged by warm and humid conditions.

### HOW ARE SAMPLING RESULTS USEFUL?

- In specific instances, such as cases where there are medically-based health concerns, or the source(s) of contamination is unclear, sampling results, along with visual inspections, remediation strategies, and considerations of potential health effects, may be used to help make informed decisions. The Army recognizes that sampling may also be needed in situations where visible mold is present and there is a need to have the mold identified to validate a medical diagnosis.
- If indoor air quality assessments include sampling for mold spores, a common approach to interpreting results relies on comparisons of sample results from indoors versus outdoors. Further investigation may be required in the following situations:
  - In general, indoor mold spore air counts should be lower than those outdoors. When spore counts are greater indoors than outdoors, the source of mold may not solely be the outdoor environment.
  - If there is a significant difference in the kinds of mold(s) identified inside compared to outside the home, this may indicate that the home is actively growing mold.
- When sampling for mold spores, non-viable air sampling is typically conducted. Non-viable air sampling will measure the presence and concentration of airborne spores and fungal fragments. This may 1) determine the presence of an indicator species that may indicate excessive moisture; and 2) characterize indoor air as biologically different from outdoor air.
  - When indicator species are identified and/or the indoor environment is biologically different than the outdoor environment, further investigation into the source of the mold is highly recommended.

### WHAT ARE THE LIMITATIONS OF SAMPLING?

- As researchers have not found exactly how much mold exposure it takes to cause health problems, standards for judging what is an acceptable, tolerable, or normal quantity of indoor mold have not been established. As a result, sampling cannot be used to evaluate a building’s compliance with a health-based standard and is not typically recommended.
- It is essential to remember that indoor air quality assessment sampling results represent only the conditions at the time when the sampling was conducted. Results cannot be relied on to represent conditions on times other than those reported.

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Research studies report that finding and correcting sources of dampness is a more effective way to prevent health problems than conducting air sampling for indoor mold. It is important to correct mold and moisture problems as soon as possible by first fixing the source of the moisture problem, removing contaminated materials, cleaning the surfaces, and finally drying the area completely. Contact your housing office to report water/moisture issues immediately, before mold becomes a problem.
- For more information about possible indoor air hazards such as mold in Army Family Housing, go to: <https://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/workplacehealth/ih/Pages/Indoor-Air-Quality-Mold.aspx>

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