

Information Regarding Mold and Water Damage

The California Department of Public Health (DPH) has issued advice for homeowners or tenants that may have mold-related health issues. DPH advises that if any homeowner or tenant has health issues resulting from excessive mold on its interior walls, windows or ceiling surfaces it is most likely the result of improper ventilation, condensation or water leakage into the interior of the home. Excessive moisture resulting from lack of ventilation (windows unable to open or the lack of mechanical ventilation) or water leakage may cause mold growth or mold odor which may be unhealthy. Mold spores are common, but are only able to grow and cause an unhealthy situation if the home's interior is consistently or previously warm and moist. If mold is present, steps should be taken by either the homeowner or tenant to correct the dampness or water leak problem.

To date, there is no conclusive state or federal policy to evaluate the health risks that dampness and mold may pose to building occupants. DPH has concluded after extensive tests that "sound, science-based Permissible Exposure Limits (PELs) for mold in indoor environments cannot be established at this time."

DPH has also determined that current consensus does not justify the variation of some molds as "toxic molds" that can be hazardous to healthy individuals. The presence of molds that grow only on very wet materials might be interpreted as conditions that could place occupants at an increased risk. However, the only types of evidence that have been related consistently to adverse health effects are either the presence of water damage, damp wall or framing materials, or, visible mold, and mold odor, *not* the number or type of mold spores nor the presence of other markers of mold in indoor air or dust.

The presence of moisture is what allows mold growth. In addition to mold, indoor dampness may support bacterial growth and contribute to infestations of house dust mites, cockroaches, and rodents, which also pose health risks for building occupants.

The California Department of Health Services agrees with other building and health professionals that indoor dampness, water intrusion or fungal growth should always be eliminated.

The California Department of Public Health has also provided guidelines for the general clean-up of mold after the moisture problem or water leak has been eliminated, which includes common household cleaners. You may visit DPH's website for more information: www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/IAQ.