

# ***Mold Myths***

## ***Myth No. 1: Mold grows only on paper, wood and other organic material***

**Facts:** Mold will grow on any surface, including glass, fiberglass and even steel. Mold needs three things to grow: 1) mold spores, which are always in the air; 2) moisture; and 3) a food source, which can be as simple as household dust. Houses are constructed using a wide variety of organic materials; as a result, the only effective strategy to control mold is to control excessive moisture.

## ***Myth No. 2: Mold can be eliminated***

**Facts:** Only "clean room" technologies—which are too expensive and unnecessary for the home or office—can eliminate mold spores. Therefore, the only thing you can control in your home or office is moisture. We all benefit from some molds, including the species that led to the development of penicillin. We do not live in sterile conditions and mold will always be with us. However, excessive mold growth inside of a home or office can be identified, treated and controlled and brought back into background levels.

## ***Myth No. 3: Mold is the only moisture control issue of concern***

**Facts:** While excessive moisture causes mold, it also fosters the growth of dust mites and bacteria, as well as attracts cockroaches and rodents. Moisture will ultimately damage finishes and otherwise shorten the useful life of building materials. So, not only does uncontrolled excessive moisture make a building less comfortable, it will ultimately diminish the building's value.

## ***Myth No. 4: Only experts can clean mold***

**Facts:** Homeowners can clean small patches of mold using household detergents and warm water. It is important to scrub vigorously any mold patch in order to remove mold spores that otherwise would remain and foster future mold outbreaks. After cleaning, rinsing and drying the spot where mold has grown, rubber gloves and cleaning cloths used in the process should be discarded. Larger patches of mold may need to be eliminated by trained professionals.

## ***Myth No. 5: Once mold starts, it will always be present***

**Facts:** Mold can be stopped in its tracks, but only if moisture is minimized or eliminated. Building experts urge homeowners to be aware of some of the telltale signs of mold, which include dampness, odors, discoloration, peeling paint, condensation, compacted insulation and visible discoloration.

## ***Myth No. 6: Only unkempt houses have mold problems.***

**Facts:** This is one of the greatest causes of the negative stigma attached to mold and it is completely false. Mold reproduces by producing microscopic particles called spores which become airborne. Mold spores are so minuscule that more than 250,000 can fit on the head of a pin. Millions of these spores travel through the air everyday and can enter almost any environment in seconds.

Mold spores will germinate in moisture-rich environments. For example, a homeowner affected by a flood or a hurricane may go to great lengths to alleviate all of the water damage cause by the storm. But ceilings, walls, carpets and other household staples dampened by the storm are already ripe for mold growth. This means that even the cleanest house on the block can be a breeding ground for problematic mold.

***Myth No. 7: Mold contamination is largely a product of socio-economic status.***

**Facts:** This myth also completely misses the mark. Location or income have no bearing on where a mold problem will develop. It depends on the combined presence of the three main factors: moisture, food source and mold spores for inoculation.

***Myth No. 8: Once a house or building has been treated for mold contamination it loses its value.***

**Facts:** Mold problems can be remediated by properly trained personnel who understand the principles of mold remediation. Once remediated, a third party testing company should inspect the area and confirm that the home was returned to a normal/background condition. Remediation companies should not perform testing as that is a conflict of interest. A certificate can be issued certifying the completion of the remediation project by the remediation company.

***Myth No. 9: Molds are Toxic and will ruin our lives.***

**Facts:** The popular media incorrectly uses the term “toxic mold” in a lethal context. The truth is that mold is everywhere in our environment. There are few, if any, “toxic” molds.

To be sure, molds can cause physical reactions in humans. These reactions typically range from skin rashes, to sneezing, headaches, and in some cases, difficulty breathing. Many people are allergic to molds as well and will demonstrate allergic reactions when they are in moldy areas. On rare occasions, molds can have a greater impact upon individuals whose immune systems are seriously compromised.

**For more information on Moisture and Mold Testing in your home or office call Booth Environmental Services, LLC**

# ***Asbestos: Key Things You Should Know***

## **What is asbestos?**

Asbestos is the name of a group of naturally occurring minerals whose crystals form into long, thin fibers. It has been used in thousands of products because of its unique properties such as high tensile strength, flexibility, acoustical properties, and resistance to thermal, chemical, and electrical conditions. If inhaled, asbestos can cause diseases such as lung cancer, mesothelioma and asbestosis. Symptoms of these diseases generally do not appear for 10 to 30 years after exposure. There is no safe level of exposure known. Asbestos is only dangerous when it is deteriorated to the point where the microscopic asbestos fibers can be released into the air and inhaled.

## **What common products contain asbestos?**

Asbestos has been used in over 3,600 different building products including spray-on ceiling and wall texture, fireproofing, plaster, pipe coverings, floor tile, ceiling tile, roofing felt, concrete pipes and exterior siding. It is still used widely today and may be found in common building materials for sale at the local home supply stores.

## **Examples of Where Asbestos Hazards May Be Found In the Home**

- Some roofing and siding shingles are made of asbestos cement.
- Houses built between 1930 and 1950 may have asbestos as insulation.
- Asbestos may be present in textured paint and in patching compounds used on wall and ceiling joints. Their use was banned in 1977.
- Artificial ashes and embers sold for use in gas-fired fireplaces may contain asbestos.
- Older products such as stove-top pads may have some asbestos compounds.
- Walls and floors around woodburning stoves may be protected with asbestos paper, millboard, or cement sheets.
- Asbestos is found in some vinyl floor tiles and the backing on vinyl sheet flooring and adhesives. Some ceiling tiles are also known to contain asbestos.
- Hot water and steam pipes in older houses may be coated with an asbestos material or covered with an asbestos blanket or tape.

## **How do I know if I have asbestos in my Home?**

Asbestos in materials can only be identified by using a microscope. Samples of a suspect material can be taken by the homeowner, but precautions should be

followed. The material should be lightly wetted before sampling; place the material in a sample container or small zip lock bag; tightly seal and label before sending the sample to a laboratory for analysis.

### **How To Identify Materials That Contain Asbestos**

You can't tell whether a material contains asbestos simply by looking at it, unless it is labeled. If in doubt, treat the material as if it contains asbestos or have it sampled and analyzed by a qualified professional. A professional should take samples for analysis, since a professional knows what to look for, and because there may be an increased health risk if fibers are released. In fact, if done incorrectly, sampling can be more hazardous than leaving the material alone. Taking samples yourself is not recommended. Material that is in good condition and will not be disturbed (by remodeling, for example) should be left alone. Only material that is damaged or will be disturbed should be sampled.

### **Do not cut, rip, or sand asbestos-containing materials.**

Leave undamaged materials alone and, to the extent possible, prevent them from being damaged, disturbed, or touched. Periodically inspect for damage or deterioration. Discard damaged or worn asbestos gloves, stove-top pads, or ironing board covers. Check with the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality to find out about proper handling and disposal procedures. If asbestos material is more than slightly damaged, or if you are going to make changes in your home that might disturb it, repair or removal by a professional is needed. Before you have your house remodeled, find out whether asbestos materials are present.

### **Asbestos Professionals: Who Are They And What Can They Do?**

Asbestos professionals are trained in handling asbestos material. The type of professional will depend on the type of product and what needs to be done to correct the problem. You may hire a general asbestos contractor or, in some cases, a professional trained to handle specific products containing asbestos.

Asbestos professionals can conduct home inspections, take samples of suspected material, assess its condition, and advise about what corrections are needed and who is qualified to make these corrections. Once again, material in good condition need not be sampled unless it is likely to be disturbed. Professional correction or abatement contractors repair or remove asbestos materials.

### **When You Hire A Professional Asbestos Inspector**

Ask to see their credentials. Make sure that the Professional is currently Certified in their area of practice by the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality.

Make sure that the inspection will include a complete visual examination and the careful collection and lab analysis of samples. If asbestos is present, the inspector should provide a written evaluation describing its location and extent of damage, and give recommendations for correction or prevention.

Make sure an inspecting firm makes frequent site visits if it is hired to assure that a contractor follows proper procedures and requirements. The inspector may recommend and perform air sampling checks after the correction to assure the area has been properly cleaned.

**For more information on Asbestos issues in your home, office, school or church call Booth Environmental Services, LLC**