

## What is Toxic Mold?

We have mold in all our homes, but usually it is in small enough quantities to not be of concern. Mold is normal and a necessity; it's nature's way of decaying things to put back in the earth. Trying to eliminate it is an unrealistic goal, but it is possible to control it so that it doesn't pose health risks. However, visible mold indicates a possible problem and should be addressed.

Mold is a fungus that will flourish in areas of high humidity or steady moisture. Typical locations: refrigerator drip pans, windowsills, toilet tank, air conditioner, humidifiers, basements, attics, even in our shoes. Unless one is highly sensitive to mold, this normal and seemingly inconsequential amount is generally not enough to produce undesirable symptoms.

Only in the last few years has mold become recognized as a serious problem in buildings and homes. New homes have a greater risk of contracting mold because homes today are built "tight", not allowing moisture or air to circulate, therefore inviting mold to accumulate and spread. For example:

- \* Many new homes are built from Pine, Hemlock or engineered wood products that are more susceptible to fungal growth than Douglas Fir, which was used to build many older homes.
- \* Because of energy codes, insulation is used in new homes, trapping heat and moisture inside the building.
- \* Drywall is used on the walls and ceilings instead of the plaster in older homes. Because drywall has a paper coating, it's the perfect atmosphere for holding moisture and allowing mold to grow.
- \* Window frames on new homes are simply nailed on top of the outer layer of the building. Older homes were built with the window frames inside the opening.