



Healthy Homes IAQÔ

BUILDING INSPECTION SERVICES IAQ REPORT.



WHEN YOU SEE OR SUSPECT MOULD

The challenge for listing and selling agents alike these days is what to do with the mould issue. It may come to your attention by way of the Vendor or a tenant in the form of an odor complaint; or you may notice blotchy discoloration on drywall in bathrooms or basements. Worse yet, it may be brought to your attention as part of a general home inspection and it is now directly impacting the sale.

There are a few options that can be considered if mould becomes an issue in a home, but there are a few misconceptions that need clearing up. First thing to know is that the word is misused and is incorrectly applied to stains by the average observer. Mould by definition is a woolly or furry growth of minute fungi. In most cases, the casual observer, and most home inspectors, see only staining, but call it mould. Since the word has significant negative connotations, try not to use it. Call it a stain. Second, the staining can be fungi that may turn into mould given time and moisture. This can only be determined by microscopic analysis. Third, if fungi, its only harmful to the average human if it generates a huge amount of toxic airborne spores or carries a pathogen (a disease that is transferable to humans thru ingestion).

The third misconception can have a large psychological impact on the buyer and kill the deal; whether true or not. Most news articles connect mould to sickness and death. Most remediation contractors want to completely remove all elements of it by destructive means or treat it with expensive toxic chemicals. Needless to say these solutions usually kill deals and place a "do not buy" sign on the home.

Fungus is a naturally occurring organism that is all around us in the millions. It is a significant part of the air we breathe. The majority of fungi don't bother the average person, and only a few fungi have been found to be terminally harmful to humans. The two most common are some forms of stachybotris and the aspergillus genus. Some people

are adversely affected by certain types of airborne fungi in the form of allergic reactions - shortness of breath, skin reactions, head aches, running or bleeding noses, etc.

The only way to determine if a stain contains active fungi; if that active fungi contains aerosol mycotoxins; and if there is a pathogen involved is to have the stain tested in an approved laboratory.

If a stain is observed, and there is a concern, the following steps can be taken towards finding a reasonable solution.

1. If the stain is on drywall, clean with a light borax or light bleach solution and see if it reoccurs.
2. Monitor the home for high moisture levels (consistently above 60% MC).
3. Monitor the home for obvious leaks - wet carpets, dripping pipes, etc.
4. Remove any possible moisture source from the equation and wait and see.
5. If the stain reoccurs, or the occupants are sick only in the home, then consult with a mould specialist. Demolition of the area may be required to find the source of moisture. Testing will determine if a household solution is practical. If the stain is a toxic or pathogenic mould, then only deal with an expert EPA approved restoration contractor and get the guarantee in writing - for resale purposes. Most cases it doesn't need to go that far.
6. If the stain is in an attic or crawlspace, consult with a professional to have the stain tested, the structure reviewed for damage, the cause assessed and recommendations provided to ensure it is eliminated, and professional verification of the process to assist resale.

Restoration contractors will have you believe that the only solution is an expensive rehab - this without even having the stain or growth tested. Consider the alternatives before relying on demolition as a solution.

Craig Hostland P. Eng. RHI

Healty Homes IAQ 862-6400

558-1160

833-1152