



## Follow up from CDPH Mold in the Home Webinar on March 10, 2021

Below are the links mentioned in the Mold in the Home Webinar, Community Health, Indoor Air Quality, and Tenants' Rights Experts Address Common Questions, as well as the answers to questions and comments we did not get to during the webinar. For clarity, we have also included some key points about mold and health.

### Links

- Six CDPH mold videos in English and Spanish ([cdph.ca.gov/mold](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/mold)) - <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DEODC/EHIB/CPE/Pages/Mold.aspx> -
- Frequently Asked Question on Mold ([cdph.ca.gov/IAQ/Mold](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/IAQ/Mold)) - <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DEODC/EHLB/IAQ/Pages/Mold-FAQs.aspx>
- Searchable list of code enforcers in California - <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DEODC/EHLB/IAQ/Pages/Code-Enforcement.aspx>
- Environmental Protection Agency guide for mold remediation - <https://www.epa.gov/mold/mold-cleanup-your-home>
- Lifschitz Law resources and tenants guide - <https://tenantlawaction.com>

### Questions and Comments

#### Health and Mold

#### **Question: How can we identify the relationship between mold and health?**

Answer: The presence of visible mold, visible moisture, water-damaged materials, or mold odor in a building is clearly linked to increased risk of various respiratory health effects. These health effects include asthma development, asthma exacerbation, allergies, respiratory infections, and a variety of upper and lower respiratory symptoms. The more extensive or severe the dampness and mold, the greater the risk of health effects. The health effects also depend on the susceptibility of the occupants. Speak to your doctor if you have concerns about the health effects of mold.

#### **Question: Can mycotoxins from mold affect folks long after leaving the moldy situation?**

Answer: Fungi produce mycotoxins, and studies show that these mycotoxins can have strong health effects when ingested. However, when looking at health associations of mycotoxins through inhalation and at levels observed in indoor environment, the science is much less clear.

**Question: What are symptoms of mold exposure beyond respiratory?**

Answer: The scientifically documented relationships between mold exposure and health are predominately respiratory but do include eczema and atopic dermatitis. Other studies have considered many symptoms, such as depression and sleep, but these studies are limited and only suggestive of a relationship.

**Question: Do I need to test for mold and identify the mold species in my home/building?**

If you know you have a dampness or mold problem because you can see it (mold, water damage, or moisture) or smell it (moldy or musty odor):

- You do not need to measure the amount or identify the type of mold.
- Testing does not give you any more useful information.
- Most importantly, measuring molds does not tell you if there is a health problem.
- Mold tests typically count visible or cultured mold spores in the indoor air or on indoor surfaces—for example, *Penicillium*, *Aspergillus*, or *Stachybotrys* species.
- There are no recommended "unhealthy levels" for spore concentrations or for particular kinds of molds.
- If you want professional help, experienced building investigators can assess your home/ building for moisture or mold.

Most experienced investigators rarely test for mold. Rather, they inspect for signs of moisture and try to find its source so it can be fixed. American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) has a document describing inspectable criteria in buildings that serve as early-warning thresholds of possible future problems in buildings.

Some investigators may recommend mold testing as part of an investigation, but it is not clear what useful information this is likely to give you. In some cases, mold testing may identify hidden moisture that is not obvious. However, if you can see or smell moisture/mold, such measurements may not be necessary at all.

A building investigator's (or litigator's) conclusions from mold tests about water damage or mold growth are based only on their judgement, and not on solid scientific evidence. For example, some say that indoor mold levels higher than outdoor levels show that you have indoor mold growth, but this has not been scientifically proven, and mold levels vary widely over time both indoors and outdoors.

## Renters and Mold

**Question: Can you discuss how to handle issues between landlord and tenant, specifically about who caused mold and who is responsible for cost related to remediation?**

Answer: A landlord has a legal duty to maintain a rental property in a safe and habitable condition as well as perform needed maintenance and repairs. Even if the landlord claims the tenant was the cause for mold, it does not take away the landlord's legal obligation to perform the needed repairs at his/her cost. Any dispute about who is responsible for causing the mold can be addressed separately but does not provide the landlord a legal reason to refuse to do the repairs. Generally, tenants have a strong case in showing the mold was caused by the owner's negligent failure to do needed maintenance. Still, this why tenants should try to document the sources of the water intrusion as much as the mold that resulted from it.

**Question: If I have a rental house, hotel or motel with rooms that have significant, visible mold on them and property owner or management refuses to abate, in order to have abatement occur, should we no longer be requiring mold certification reports?**

Answer: We at CDPH are not familiar with mold certification reports and can't answer that part of the question. If rooms have significant, visible mold on them, then they pose a health risk and should be remediated. According to the [California Health and Safety Code](#), both dampness of habitable rooms and visible mold growth make housing substandard.

**Question: I was told text messages are not official documentation or notification, is that false? Can text messages count in court?**

Answer: Yes, if the owner answers at least once, indicating that they are receiving the texts

## Mold, Community Health Workers, and Code Enforcement

**Question: What exactly is a promotora de salud? How do promotoras relate to code enforcement?**

Answer: Promotores de salud, also known as promotoras, is the Spanish term for "community health workers." Promotores de salud are lay health workers who work in Spanish-speaking communities (CDC). Promotores are community members who act as natural helpers and liaisons to provide meaningful information and resources to their neighbors and neighborhoods. They are trusted members of their community, and they are community experts and grassroots leaders. They often have unique access to hard to reach communities.

Code Enforcement is a function of local governments. Code enforcers are responsible for the prevention, detection, investigation and enforcement of

violations of statutes or ordinances regulating public health, safety, and welfare, public works, business activities and consumer protection, building standards, land-use, or municipal affairs (<https://www.caceo.us/page/10>).

There is no specific interaction between promotoras and code enforcement.

**Question: Are there any promotoras in San Diego County?**

Answer: Yes. Visit <https://www.sdcpromotores.org/>

Bleach and Household Cleaners

**Question: What is the problem with a diluted bleach solution for cleaning?**

**Question: Is using bleach not a suggested cleaning agent for porous materials such as drywall as a temporary "fix"?**

Answer: We do not recommend using bleach, even diluted. Chlorine bleach can cause asthma, can damage skin, eye and other membranes. It is better to use a household cleaner that does not have these potentially harmful effects to clean the mold. Moldy drywall must be removed and replaced. For more information, visit <https://sfenvironment.org/article/residents/cleaning-products>

**Question: Does water, baking soda and dish soap actually remove the mold or only the smell of the mold?**

Answer: Yes, household cleaners can get rid of mold on tile and other hard surfaces. When the mold gets into soft materials like rugs or drywall, the materials need to be thrown away.