

## **Mold Prevention**

### ABOUT MOLD

#### **Controlling moisture is the key to controlling mold in your housing.**

Note, that as part of a natural environment, molds may begin growing indoors whenever mold spores land on wet or damp surfaces.

Molds produce allergens, but like all allergens, individual reactions will differ. Some people may not be affected, while others may experience hay-fever type symptoms or have a stronger reaction. If you believe you may be having a reaction to mold allergens, contact the Student Health Center for an appointment.

Molds are part of the natural environment. In the outdoors, molds play a part in nature by breaking down dead organic matter such as fallen leaves and dead trees, but indoors, mold growth should be avoided. Molds reproduce by means of tiny spores; the spores are invisible to the naked eye and float through outdoor and indoor air. Mold may begin growing indoors when mold spores land on surfaces that are wet. There are many types of molds, and none of them will grow without water or moisture.

It is impossible to get rid of all mold and mold spores indoors; some mold spores will be found floating through the air and in house dust. The mold spores will not grow if moisture is not present. Indoor mold can and should be prevented or controlled by controlling moisture indoors.

--Environmental Protection Agency

### PREVENTION STEPS YOU CAN TAKE

#### **Mold Prevention and Reporting**

The changing nature of our region's climate over the past several years has led to the potential for a recurring condition – the development of mold. To prevent misinformation from circulating regarding the college's response to mold within the Residence Halls, here you will find an update on the current state of our campus residence halls, information on how the college deals with this challenge, and details on what students should be prepared to do.

The current state:

Mold is a naturally occurring phenomenon and mold spores are all around us. When spores enter a room, and the conditions are right, then mold can grow. This summer, the college has been proactive in its preparations for the return of students, which you can read more about below. Even so, diligence on the parts of the college's residence life staff, maintenance and facilities department, and student-residents continue to be required.

## **Mold Prevention**

### **University preparations for fall**

#### **Cleaning and Maintenance**

- Every room over the summer has had its floors extracted, furniture cleaned, and walls and baseboards wiped down. Each room is inspected for any mold growth. Cleaners for the college utilized a mold killing cleaning solvent.
- In those instances where mold has been discovered on walls or ceilings the issue has been and will continue to be handled by cleaning and killing the mold with a cleaning solvent that eradicates the issue.
- Every AC/heater unit has been cleaned by the college, again using mold killing solvent.

#### **Education**

- Helpful information will be available in print for student-residents at check-in concerning room care and conditions.
- Room care and conditions will be a topic at all opening floor meetings.

#### **Student-resident responsibilities**

Because substances thrive in wet or humid conditions, cleanliness in the residence hall living environment can assist in improving air quality and promoting a healthy and comfortable living environment. Items such as wet towels or clothing and oils or residue in leftover food containers and spilled drinks can be a medium for substance growth. For these reasons, all students are asked to be responsible for the “**3 c’s**”: **Climate, Cleaning and Communication:**

#### **Climate**

**Controlling room climate is essential to the success of managing indoor air quality and comfort. Moisture and humidity provide conditions that are favorable for growth of mold.**

The campus’ heating plant strives to maintain optimal levels of humidity and temperature. Residence Hall residents are expected to assist the Heating Plant with this effort by following the guidelines below:

- **KEEP WINDOWS CLOSED** when the air conditioning unit is running. The condensation created during cooling season by open windows (hot air) mixing with conditioned air (cool air) indoors can lead to significant mold and moisture problems in both the room and the AC/heater unit.
- Close blinds/curtains early in the day to prevent the sun from heating the room. Turn off all the lights when leaving the room.
- Do not tamper with the AC/heater unit. Contact a Residential Life staff member in your hall for assistance with temperature or humidity issues or water intrusion.

## **Mold Prevention**

- Do not block the AC/heater air supply or return air vents or doors where the units are located. Reduced air flow to the system can result in excess moisture and promote substance growth within the system and residence hall rooms.
- **Damp or wet towels, bathmats, and any wet clothing articles (including shoes) to allow for thorough drying after use to prevent substance growth or musty odors.**
- If you find moisture building up on your windows, the AC/heater unit, or other surfaces, clean and dry it immediately. If your windows are closed and you find this condition repeats, submit a work order.

*Please note that you will be responsible for correcting conditions within your room that are designated as your responsibility, and as deemed necessary. **Tampering with units or secured windows or failure to report problems with moisture may result in a residence hall policy violation.***

### **Cleaning**

- You are responsible for cleaning your residence hall room. Maintain your residence in a responsible fashion that does not promote unhealthy conditions for you or your neighbors.
- **Hang damp or wet towels, bathmats and any wet clothing articles (including shoes) to allow for thorough drying after use to prevent substance growth or musty odors.**
- Clean any spills immediately and thoroughly.
- Empty your trash regularly to the dumpsters outside.
- Vacuum carpet or rugs, sweep floors and dust your room regularly.
- Avoid leaving open food containers out, seal all containers after use and refrigerate perishable foods. Dispose of used food containers and food scraps regularly to prevent the growth of mold.
- Follow these refrigerator tips:
  - Keep refrigerator doors tightly closed. Failure to secure refrigerator doors may result in defrosting of the freezer and may cause leaking onto the floor.
  - When defrosting refrigerators, take steps to prevent water from getting onto carpeting, rugs, or floors. Student-residents may place small refrigerators in the shower areas where there are drains to defrost the freezer as needed as long as it does not prevent other students from using the facilities.
  - Refrigerators must be emptied of contents and defrosted before leaving for winter/spring break.
- Cleaning community bathrooms is the responsibility of the college's Custodial department. Report any questionable conditions immediately through the work order system, your CA, or your Hall Director.

## **Mold Prevention**

### **Communication**

- Communication of any leaks or problematic conditions to Residence Life staff is required immediately, as it can take only 24-48 hours (about 2 days) for substances to grow.
- Residence Life Staff should always be the initial contact for indoor air quality, humidity, or mold issues - this means in your own room and in bathrooms and kitchens. Report to your CA, Hall Director, or the main Residence Life office during business hours (920-424-3212) and submit a work order.