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Navy Indoor Environmental Quality - Mold Sampling Policy in Navy Buildings

The Navy's policy, which is consistent with guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), is to not routinely sample for mold when evaluating indoor environmental quality (IEQ). This policy applies to the work environment and in government owned housing (Family Housing and Unaccompanied Housing).^{1,2}

The term "mold" is used to refer to fungi that are naturally occurring in the environment. Molds are found year-round in virtually every environment, indoors and outdoors, and at work and home. There is no practical way to eliminate all mold and mold spores from the indoor environment.

The emphasis for dealing with mold focuses on visual inspection and determining the source of the moisture (e.g., water intrusion, plumbing leaks, etc.), and other contributing factors (e.g., temperature, humidity, ventilation, sanitation, etc.). It is important to correct mold and moisture problems as soon as possible through remediation and/or removal of mold contaminated materials within 24-48 hours, cleaning the surfaces, controlling the moisture source, and drying the area completely.

A mold's ability to result in health effects and symptoms will vary by the genus/species. No one knows how many species of mold exist, but estimates are 100,000 or more. Individual susceptibility to mold varies widely depending on the species and amount of mold. Therefore, mold sampling and culturing are not reliable in determining an individual's health risk.

Due to these factors, there are no federal health standards for what are "unacceptable" levels of mold in the indoor environment. Therefore, there is no health standard to which mold sampling results can be compared. Further, since most people are allergic to more than one allergen, and most homes have multiple detectable allergens (e.g., pet dander, pollen, rats, mice, cockroaches, dust mites, air fresheners, candles, lawns, plants, trees, etc.), sampling for mold alone is also not a reliable factor for determining health risk.

All mold issues, regardless of species, are treated the same: control the moisture source, and remediate the contamination. Mold sampling results do not change this. Nor do they provide a reliable indication of health risk.

For more information about mold visit: <https://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/industrial-hygiene/Pages/Mold-Information-Resources.aspx>

This policy also aligns with guidance from:

- CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/mold/faqs.htm#test>)
- EPA (<https://www.epa.gov/mold/mold-testing-or-sampling>)
- OSHA (<https://www.osha.gov/dts/shib/shib101003.html>)
- American Industrial Hygiene Association (<https://www.aiha.org/publications-and-resources/TopicsofInterest/Hazards/Pages/Facts-About-Mold.aspx>)
- Army and Air Force policy is the same³
(<https://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/workplacehealth/ih/Pages/Indoor-Air-Quality-Mold.aspx>)

1 OPNAVINST 5100.23G Navy Safety and Occupational Health Program Manual

2 NMCPHC Industrial Hygiene Field Operations Manual - <https://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/industrial-hygiene/industrial-hygiene-field-operations-manual/Pages/default.aspx>

3 AFRL-SA-WP-SR-2014-0012 Technical Guide for Indoor Air Quality Surveys July 2014