

# Addressing and Detecting Hazards from Mold Transcript

## Topic 3: Health Concerns

### Slide 1: Title Slide – Health Concerns

### Slide 2: Topic 3: Health Concerns

Welcome to Topic 3 of the training on Detecting and Addressing Hazards from Mold. In this segment, we will discuss health concerns associated with mold.

### Slide 3: Exposure to Mold Can Cause Health Problems

The effect of mold on humans is a relatively new science. It changes all the time as new information is discovered and old ideas get debunked. It is important to be aware of the current scientific knowledge of the effects mold can have on human beings.

The National Academy of Sciences recently conducted a comprehensive review and analysis of the scientific literature on mold. They found that there was sufficient evidence to link mold and other factors related to damp indoor environments with some respiratory tract symptoms, coughing, wheezing, and asthma in sensitized persons or people who already have respiratory problems.

Molds produce allergens, irritants, and in some cases, potentially toxic substances, or mycotoxins. But people react differently to mold exposure. An important factor is whether the person is more vulnerable to illness, as is the case with the very young, the very old, people with respiratory conditions, and people with weakened immune systems. Another factor is the level and duration of mold exposure, as well as the type of mold.

### Slide 4: mold exposure symptoms

For mold-sensitive people, exposure to certain molds may cause a severe asthma attack. Mold can also cause irritation to the eyes, nose, throat, lungs, and skin. For example, mold can produce watery eyes, a runny nose, breathing difficulties, and a burning sensation on the skin.

Only a small group of fungi have been associated with infectious diseases, and exposure to mold is unlikely to cause infection in a healthy person. However, people with weakened or suppressed immune systems may get an infection after exposure to mold. In rare cases, breathing in mold can cause hypersensitivity pneumonitis, a condition that resembles bacterial pneumonia.

There are many symptoms of mold exposure, and mold allergy symptoms may mimic other upper respiratory symptoms. The symptoms shown on the slide may be associated with exposure to mold but could also be caused by health conditions or exposure to other toxins.

#### Slide 5: Other Health Concerns from Damp Buildings

Mold is not the only potential contaminant in damp buildings. Biological and non-biological contaminants, other than mold, may also be present and cause negative health effects. Damp buildings attract rodents, dust mites, cockroaches, and other pests. Damp or wet building components and furnishings may emit irritating chemicals. All may cause similar health issues.

If you see mold or mildew in a housing unit, you may decide to tell the tenant to go ahead and clean it. But don't recommend a particular cleaning product, as you could unwittingly expose a resident to an allergen that may be harmful to them. And if you think the situation warrants more than just a scrubbing or if you cannot see the cause, you should have a conversation with your supervisor.

If you enter a unit and the resident complains about asthma, or that the kids are coughing, it could be mold but it could be something else. Since you are not a doctor, you should not make comments that confirm causes or reasons for illnesses. You should never offer medical advice to tenants or occupants, either purposefully or accidentally. You should observe and document the unit conditions and then talk to your supervisor about any potential signs of mold.

#### Slide 6: Topic 3 Takeaways

The first key takeaway from this topic is that mold affects people differently. Young children, older people, and people with weakened immune systems are most at risk of negative effects from mold.

Another takeaway is that symptoms of mold allergies can mimic other human illnesses. You should never try to diagnose or offer medical advice.

Finally, remember that mold is not the only potential contaminant in damp buildings that cause health issues. Look for other contaminants as well. But if you suspect mold infestation, you will need to investigate that further, usually with the help of a third party.

#### Slide 7

That completes training Topic 3, Health Concerns. Please continue to the next video for Topic 4, which covers types of mold assessment.