The Dangers Of **Do-It-Yourself** Mold Removal

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It's All Fun And Games Until Fungus Shows Up

Mold: *A furry growth of minute fungal hyphae occurring typically in moist, warm conditions.*

Mold does wonders for the great outdoors, serving as a natural decomposer by breaking down fallen leaves, dead trees and other organic matter. But inside houses and buildings, mold poses detrimental risks to health and safety.

If rainwater or leaking pipes have created the damp-and-dewy conditions for a mold intrusion in a home or building, it's crucial that you have it removed quickly, safely and professionally. Because mold has the potential to cause serious health effects, mold removal is *not* a DIY job for someone without proper training and equipment.

Here's a rundown of the dangers of DIY mold removal:

Mold is a murky menace.

Mold affects each person differently. For example, someone with asthma or other respiratory problems, mold allergies or a weakened immune system, should *never* attempt to remove a mold colony. These risk factors greatly increase the danger of ingested mold spores.

Also, not all mold is created equal. The *type* of mold that's infesting the home or building directly correlates with how dangerous it is to remove it. Toxigenic molds, like Stachybotrys chartarum ("black mold"), are much more dangerous than pathogenic molds, while pathogenic molds present more danger than allergenic types – but more on that later.* These distinctions should not, and actually *cannot*, be made simply by searching through and comparing mold images online. Only a mold expert can accurately determine the exact type of spore that's wreaking havoc on a home or building.

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It's not *just* the mold that poses problems.

While you may be able to get away with using weak household mold killers, like vinegar, for small mildew infestations, the larger colonies necessitate highly corrosive agents to ensure total annihilation. These powerful chemicals, like sodium hypochlorite (bleach), quaternary ammonium compounds and isopropyl alcohol, are dangerous to work with if you don't have the proper protection and cleaning expertise. Therefore, it's best to leave it to the mold-removal experts who are properly shielded with rubber gloves, protective clothing, goggles and respirators.

Symptom categories:

- Mental and neurological symptoms
- Respiratory symptoms
- Circulatory symptoms
- Vision and eye problems
- Skin problems
- Immune system problems
- Reproductive system problems
- Tiredness and discomfort
- Other illnesses/ health effects

*Don't underestimate the mold spore.

Whether allergenic, pathogenic or toxigenic, all mold types carry health risks. However, some strains are especially harmful.

Toxic black mold, the type that's often found in damp or water-damaged buildings and homes, causes serious symptoms and health problems, and sometimes even leads to death.

Many people are surprised to hear that mold can cause mental and neurological symptoms. While the black mold is not toxic itself, it produces trichothecene mycotoxins – and these toxics are not only toxic, but also neurotoxic. This means they have the potential to kill neurons and impair mental functioning for either the short or long term.

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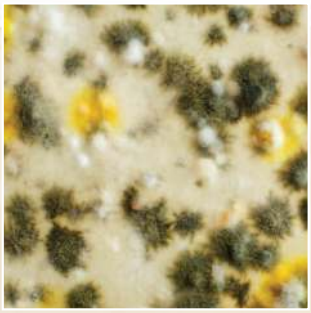

Mental/neurological symptoms:

- Confusion
- Brain fog
- Shortened attention span
- Difficulty concentrating and paying attention
- Slowed reflexes
- Disorientation
- Dizziness
- Memory loss and memory problems
- Impaired learning ability
- Hallucinations
- Shock
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Aggression and other personality changes
- Tingling
- Trembling
- Shaking
- Seizure
- Numbness

Can mold cause cancer?

While many experts suspect that toxic black mold can cause cancer, the jury is still out on a definite answer. However, other toxic molds are known *for sure* to cause cancer risks. For example, Aspergillus produces aflatoxin mycotoxins, which are some of the most powerful carcinogens.

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It's all fun and games until fungus shows up.

The moldy truth is that mold *spores* are present in the air at all times. They're a natural part of the environment and, most of the time, they don't cause issues. The problem arises when the old becomes *visible*. So it's not about getting rid of naturally occurring fungal *spores* – it's about eliminating the nasty, *visible* growth.

Recruit the experts.

To properly and safely remove fungal growth from all identified areas, mold removal efforts must comply with the EPA's "Mold Remediation In Buildings" guidelines.

This means that the restoration company you recruit to tackle your mold situation must be consistently educating its technicians on industry-standard mold removal practices, training them on critical safety precautions and arming them with the most effective mold remediation equipment.

By entrusting mold removal to AOA Restoration Navigators™ – who are up to date on industry standards and have access to the proper remediation equipment – you guarantee that all infected areas are 100% treated and spores are not further disseminated throughout the home or building.

To contact one of AOA's Restoration Navigators and start the conversation about professional mold remediation, commercial cleaning and/or disaster restoration services, fill out this contact form or call 201.848.8600.

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