

AllergyCheck Test – Information on Mould Allergens

General Mould Information

Moulds are everywhere in nature, and mould spores (seeds) are a common component of household and workplace dust. However, when mould spores are present in large quantities, they can present a health hazard to humans, potentially causing allergic reactions and respiratory problems. However, as with all allergens some people will be more sensitive than others. In some people very tiny quantities cause allergic sensitisation and then quite severe symptoms, even in extreme cases anaphylaxis and death.

In essence, the moulds are everywhere, a sight of a large “furry” colony is rare and most spores are invisible to the naked eye. They will be present in the dust of every home, workplace etc. Their growth and colonisation is encouraged in damp environments – although this may cause particular offence to a customer, mould is everywhere and is not necessarily a measure of domestic diligence!

The treatment for an allergy to any of the moulds tested is identical – avoidance. There are commercial products available to reduce dust and airborne allergens in the home. Furthermore, there are physical steps such as changing carpets for solid floorings and using of bed linen designed for those with dust allergies. Refer to the Allergy UK website www.allergyuk.org for details of products that they endorse that can help. Many moulds enter the home on the skin of fruit (an example would be a mouldy peach in a fruit bowl), on cheeses and/or on plants, removal of these may help.

Crucially for the customer, you will need to reassure them and inform them how to deal with the situation. Remember that referral to Allergy UK is the main action that should be taken. The telephone number for their Allergy Helpline is 01322 619898. The helpline operates from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

There are 3 moulds on the AllergyCheck test as follows:

1) Cladosporium herbarum

Cladosporium is one of the most common colonizers of dying and dead plants and also occurs in various soil types, and on food. This mould is frequently found in unclean refrigerators, foodstuffs, on moist window frames, in houses with poor ventilation, with straw roofs, and situated in low, damp areas.

2) Aspergillus fumigatus

Aspergillus fumigatus is found in soils, leaf and plant litter, decaying vegetables and roots, bird droppings, tobacco, stored sweet potatoes. The concentration of these mould spores in the air is low although there may be high localised counts.

3) **Alternaria alternata**

Alternaria alternata is a fairly common indoor mould. In one study it was found in 87% of the homes examined. It is considered one of the most important fungal allergens. *Alternaria alternata* has been implicated as the cause of allergic diseases in people exposed to wood and sawdust during paper production in paper mills. It is regarded as the main cause of allergy and asthma in children aged 6–11 years.

If you have any concerns about your symptoms you should contact your GP or Healthcare Practitioner.