

# MACCHE

The Mid-Atlantic Center for  
Children's Health and the Environment



## Fact Sheet: Damp School Environments – Mold, Mildew

Dampness has many causes – a broken pipe, a leaky drain, condensation from windows or air conditioners, a leaky roof, a flood, or high humidity. Moisture and a source of other nutrients are what molds, mildew (the same thing as mold), dust mites and bacteria need to grow. The moisture alone can also cause deterioration of building materials which may release of toxic chemicals.

### What is mold?

Molds are small, microscopic organisms that grow in warm and damp environments. When mold begins to grow, it produces airborne spores that allow the mold to spread.

There are many types of mold, some are more prevalent indoors and some more prevalent outdoors. It would be unusual to have only one type of mold present in an environment; There is no specific type of mold which is more dangerous than another type of mold.

### What are the health effects of mold?

Molds cause irritation to mucous membranes and elicit allergic responses in children. Some children are sensitive to mold. A child may have the following symptoms from either mucous membrane irritation or allergy:

- Stuffy or runny nose
- Cough
- Runny, red eyes
- Difficulty breathing
- Wheezing/tightness of the chest
- Asthmatic episode
- Headache

There is no scientific evidence that mold exposure is associated with changes in brain function.

### Use caution when dealing with mold:

- The best sign of mold growth is if the air smells musty or if you see mold
- Do not touch mold with your bare hands
- Do not breathe in mold or mold spores
- If mold is growing, consult with the maintenance supervisor at your school in order to remove it. Do not remove yourself
- Air samples to determine specific types of mold or to determine “mold counts” are not useful

### How can I prevent mold growth in school?

- Provide adequate ventilation
- Prevent moisture condensation on windows, floors or roofs by adding insulation if possible
- Inform school officials about plumbing leaks and or water damage

### Resources

- Participate in US EPA's IAQ Tools for Schools Program, this program has tips on mold prevention and managing indoor air quality problems. See Tools for Schools Action Kit at [www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/actionkit.html](http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/actionkit.html)

- The Mid-Atlantic Center for Children's Health and the Environment can provide consultations for school nurses on how to help a child who may be suffering from asthma or other breathing problems. E-mail MACCHE at [macche@cnmc.org](mailto:macche@cnmc.org) or call 1-866-622-2431

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#### Citations

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- MACCHE. Fact Sheet on Mold.
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