

Normal Mold Growth: What You Need to Know

Mold Spores Are Everywhere

Ubiquity of Mold Spores

Mold spores are naturally present everywhere, both indoors and outdoors, dispersed easily through air currents.

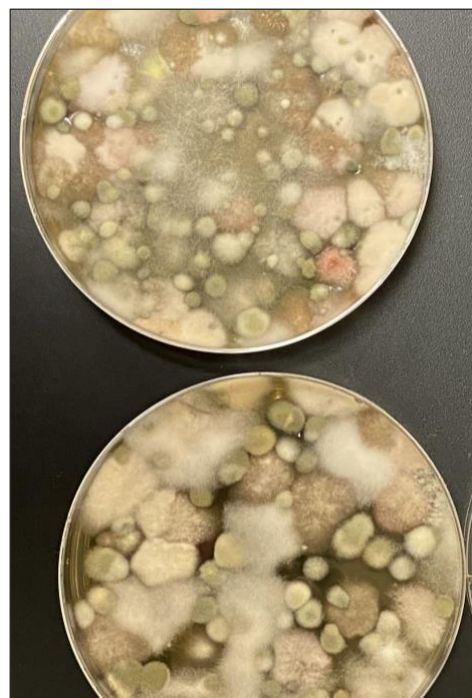
Normal Mold Growth in Tests

Mold growing on a petri dish after air exposure is expected because the media is specifically developed for growing mold. This by itself is not evidence of an indoor mold problem.

Preventive Measures

Controlling moisture, keeping surfaces clean and ensuring good airflow helps prevent mold growth indoors and reduces health risks.

Right: UW-Madison EH&S photos of mold growth on a DIY mold test after one hour of outdoor air exposure (November 2025)



Interpreting Mold Test Results



Left: UW-Madison EH&S photo of mold growth on a DIY mold test after one hour of indoor air exposure in a 2000's era campus building (November 2025)

Limitations of DIY At-Home Mold Tests

Mold tests detect airborne spores but cannot determine if they came from indoors or outdoors.

Misconceptions about Mold Tests

Mold test results do not confirm hidden mold growth in HVAC systems, behind walls or other non-visible areas.

Professional Mold Assessments

Test results provide little information without context. Experts use many factors including moisture detection, visible inspection, building condition assessment, outdoor mold levels, and presence of visible mold to assess for mold issues.

