Mold 101

CCC Campus Housing engages in routine maintenance efforts to prevent maintenance and mold concerns. Buildings and residence hall rooms are inspected multiple times per year.

If you believe that you have mold in your residence hall room, we recommend that you complete a maintenance request form found here https://www.coahomacc.edu/student-life/services/housing/residential-housing-maintenance-form.html so that CCC Housing staff are notified and can respond.

What causes mold to grow?

Mold is a part of the natural environment that aids in the decomposition of leaves, trees, and other natural outdoor organic materials. Individual mold spores are invisible to the human eye and are continually floating around outside in nature. However, when those spores make their way into the indoors and are exposed to wet/humid areas they can begin to grow or colonize. It is impossible to eliminate mold and mold spores in the indoor environment due to the ingress and egress of daily human activity being carried in on clothing, shoes, and backpacks.

Mold is found almost everywhere and can grow on wood, paper, carpet, foods, insulation, ceiling tiles, clothing and painted walls as long as moisture and oxygen are present. Mold needs water/moisture to grow, therefore maintaining indoor moisture and humidity levels between 30-60 percent will reduce the likelihood of indoor mold growth. Controlling humidity in large, heavily populated buildings is difficult, especially in hot humid weather.

Where is mold and mildew found?

Molds come in a variety of colors, including white, which is sometimes seen on a damp carpet; pink, which is often found on shower walls not cleaned regularly; and darkly pigmented, which is often seen around windowsills as a result of condensation. Given a source of moisture, mold can grow just about anywhere. Moisture control, air circulation and good housekeeping practices are necessary to control mold growth.

Are there national regulations regarding mold?

There are no federal or state regulations governing the presence of mold or mold spores in buildings. There are also no health standards from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) or public health departments for concentrations of mold

spores in the indoor air. The presence of visible mold on indoor building materials should be remediated.

Read more on mold testing or sampling from the EPA.

Why not conduct mold testing?

Mold testing is not recommended in many cases. Instead, careful detailed visual inspection and recognition of moldy odors should be used to find problems needing correction. Efforts should focus on areas where there are signs of moisture or water vapor (humidity) or where moisture problems are suspected. The investigation goals should be to locate indoor mold growth to determine how to correct the moisture problem and remove contamination safely and effectively.

The Mississippi Department of Health, as well as the CDC and EPA, do NOT recommend testing as there are no exposure-based standards to use for evaluation of the sampling results.

How does mold spread?

Air circulation in a building varies throughout the day and depends on the level of activity in that space. Mold spores are always present in both the indoor and outdoor environment and can be carried in on clothing, backpacks, shoes, etc.

Should I purchase a portable air cleaner and dehumidifier?

If you would like to purchase a portable air cleaner for your residence, please refer to the Guide to Air Cleaners in the Home provided by the EPA. University Housing will install dehumidifiers in student rooms if excessive humidity becomes an issue, and additional dehumidification is required.

Is it safe for me to stay in my residence hall that currently has mold?

In most cases, the answer is yes. According to federal health and safety agencies, mold growth is commonly found in both indoor and outdoor environments. Therefore, varying levels of mold is all around us at all times.

How does mold affect people?

Some people are sensitive to mold and may experience short-term or acute reactions in the presence of mold growth. Symptoms associated with mold exposure are not unique and cannot be readily distinguished from symptoms caused by other medical conditions, such as the common cold or seasonal environmental allergies. We recommend that you see your health care provider if you experience any health concerns.

What is the inspection process to determine how to address any mold in my residence?

A qualified team of staff members from the college responds to work orders. Staff will knock, enter, and conduct a thorough visual inspection of furniture, walls, closets, and fan coil units to check for any evidence of mold growth or other concerns, as well as take internal temperature and humidity readings.

If mold growth is found, staff will take appropriate steps to clean or remediate per the College Housing Mold Response Guidelines.

What will be done if there is mold found in my room?

Measures will be taken to thoroughly clean and dry the area affected. This work may be completed by College Housing staff and/or an outside contractor specializing in water cleanup and restoration. If necessary, dehumidifiers, fans and/or air purifiers will be placed in the living space and will need to remain operational until they are removed to enhance the drying process to prevent future mold growth. Staff will return to check regularly on the progress until the situation has been resolved and may instruct residents in ways to assist in that process. In some cases, students may be relocated within the building to an open room for a few days to allow for proper remediation. Due to the unique circumstances around each situation, cases are managed independently with communication managed by the **hall director.**

Does the College Housing staff conduct proactive inspections for mold?

Mold inspections within occupied spaces during the academic school year are only conducted at the request of a work order. Proactive inspections occur regularly throughout the year, including focusing on common areas in conjunction with the fire and life safety inspections. Comprehensive building inspections are done annually.

Mold Prevention Tips

Preventing Mold in your Residence Hall Tips

Below are a few strategies to keep in mind that will help prevent mold from growing in your room:

- For rooms that have heating and ventilation control, set the thermostat between 68 – 72 degrees Fahrenheit. Do not turn the unit on a really cool or hot setting and then turn it off once it gets to the setting. Turning units off and on continually prevents proper air flow and stagnant air leads to odors and potential mold growth issues.
- Do not block airflow from window unit air conditioners with furniture, clothing, etc.
- Keep your suite and room doors closed as much as possible to keep any outside humidity from entering your space.
- Air circulation helps prevent mold so please do not pack your closets and storage areas too tightly.
- Keep ALL vents within the room open and free of obstructions.
- Avoid placing damp or wet clothes/towels in storage spaces for extended periods of time as that will provide an environment conducive to mold growth.
- Keep your windows closed. Allowing outdoor humidity to directly enter a room enhances the chances for mold growth.
- Good housekeeping practices (vacuum floors, wipe down counters, clean up spills quickly, washout out refrigerators).
- Empty all trash and recycling regularly.
- At least once a week, bathroom shower stalls, tubs, sinks, and floors should be scrubbed cleaned with cleanser and treated with a bathroom disinfectant. If you are living in an apartment on campus, you are responsible for cleaning your own bathroom.
- Remove plants from the area, wet soil/plants and/or containers, such as wicker baskets, introduce moisture in the air and promotes fungal growth.
- Limiting hot showers to shorter periods of time to prevent excessive humidity and steam build up.
- Store food in airtight containers.
- Don’t tape your air ducts closed. This prevents proper airflow and can lead to mold growth issues.