

# Hidden Health Risks of Household Mold: What Prolonged Exposure Can Do to the Body

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Household mold is often overlooked until physical symptoms begin to emerge. In regions like Louisiana and Mississippi—where humidity and flood risks are common—mold exposure can become a silent but significant health hazard. [Earl Carr, Jr.](#), president of [Gulf 52](#) based in Hammond, Louisiana, highlights the importance of addressing mold not only as a structural issue but as a health concern.



“Mold-related illnesses are frequently misdiagnosed,” says Carr, Jr. “Many residents suffer from ongoing respiratory and neurological issues without ever connecting those symptoms to their environment.”



Mold thrives in damp, dark, and poorly ventilated areas such as basements, attics, HVAC systems, behind drywall, and beneath flooring. Even a minor roof leak, plumbing issue, or improperly sealed window can provide the moisture mold needs to grow. Common types such as *Aspergillus*, *Penicillium*, and *Stachybotrys chartarum* (black mold) release spores that travel through air and ventilation systems, often going undetected.

Short-term exposure to mold spores may cause sneezing, coughing, skin irritation, watery eyes, or sore throat. Individuals with asthma or seasonal allergies may experience flare-ups. In some cases, symptoms disappear once the individual leaves the affected environment, further masking the true cause.

However, prolonged exposure—especially in environments with hidden mold infestations—can lead to more severe outcomes. Studies have shown connections between mold exposure and



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chronic sinus infections, persistent coughing, respiratory inflammation, and reduced lung function.

More concerning is the growing evidence linking mold exposure to neurological effects. Some individuals report memory loss, trouble concentrating, and insomnia. Children, the elderly, and those with weakened immune systems are particularly vulnerable. In rare but documented cases, mycotoxins released by toxic molds have been associated with immune suppression and

damage to internal organs.

Mold exposure can also create complications for those with autoimmune conditions, exacerbating inflammation and triggering flare-ups. Unfortunately, many symptoms are mistaken for other chronic illnesses or dismissed entirely. Mold testing is not a standard part of most home inspections or doctor visits, meaning the root cause may remain undiscovered for extended periods.

Environmental conditions in the Gulf South—marked by frequent storms, humidity, and aging infrastructure—make the region particularly susceptible to mold growth. Following major hurricanes or floods, mold can spread within 24 to 48 hours if drying and remediation steps are not taken promptly.

Carr, Jr. explains that remediation must go beyond surface cleaning. “Visible mold may only be part of the problem. Mold inside wall cavities, beneath flooring, or embedded in HVAC systems often goes untreated without professional assessment.”

Preventative measures include using dehumidifiers in high-moisture areas, ensuring proper ventilation in bathrooms and kitchens, maintaining roofing and plumbing systems, and addressing any signs of water intrusion immediately.

Gulf 52 has responded to numerous calls where long-term mold exposure was uncovered only after homeowners experienced health issues. In some cases, remediation was delayed due to a lack of visible mold or the absence of musty odors.

For property owners, liability concerns also come into play. In rental situations, tenants experiencing unexplained illness may be living in mold-contaminated spaces. If landlords fail to inspect and maintain buildings appropriately, they could be held responsible for health-related damages.

Insurance coverage for mold damage varies. Many policies exclude mold remediation unless directly linked to a covered event like a burst pipe or storm damage. Property owners are

encouraged to review their coverage carefully and document any water-related incidents thoroughly.

Mold should be considered both a structural threat and a public health issue. Ignoring or delaying remediation not only increases the cost of repairs but also prolongs exposure for occupants.

Addressing mold in the Gulf region requires a combination of public awareness, proactive property management, and reliable remediation methods. Through ongoing education and response services, organizations like Gulf 52 continue to focus on limiting the impact of environmental hazards on both health and infrastructure.

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