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Mold and Pregnancy

This sheet talks about the risks that exposure to mold can have during pregnancy. With each pregnancy, all women have a 3% to 5% chance of having a baby with a birth defect. This information should not take the place of medical care and advice from your health care provider.

What is mold?

Molds are fungi that can be found both indoors and outdoors. They grow best in warm, damp, and humid places. Molds spread and reproduce by making spores that are able to live almost anywhere. The damp, moist conditions after a water leak or a flood can cause mold to grow in homes.

Mold can be many different colors and usually grows as spots in damp or water damaged areas. Mold can also have a musty, earthy smell. The four most common household molds are *Cladosporium*, *Penicillium*, *Alternaria*, and *Aspergillus*.

Can mold make me sick?

Molds themselves won't make you sick, but some molds can produce substances that can cause health problems. Symptoms from mold exposure include reactions such as stuffy nose, eye irritation, rashes, wheezing, and sometimes fever and shortness of breath. Not everyone will have these symptoms, but people who have a weak immune system or have chronic respiratory conditions such as asthma may be more sensitive to mold. If mold exposure is causing you to have any of these symptoms, you should talk to a doctor as soon as possible.

How do I keep mold out of buildings and homes?

- Keep the moisture levels in the house between 40% and 60%.
- Use an air conditioner or dehumidifier during humid months.
- Use exhaust fans in kitchens and bathrooms.
- Clean bathrooms with mold killing products.
- Do not carpet bathrooms and basements.

How can I clean up mold after a water leak or a flood?

- Remove all the items that have been wet for more than 48 hours if they cannot be thoroughly cleaned and dried. These may include carpeting, upholstery, wallpaper, drywall, floor and ceiling tiles, insulation material, clothing, leather, paper, wood, and food.
- To remove mold growth from hard surfaces, use commercial products or a bleach solution of 1 cup of bleach in 1 gallon of water. A recent study showed that a bleach solution is the best way to kill mold and the toxic substances made by molds.

I have heard that Stachybotrys is a mold that is worse than the other common molds.

Should I be worried if I have this mold in my home?

Stachybotrys is a greenish-black mold. It is not very common in homes, but it is not rare either. There are a few reports of molds such as *Stachybotrys* causing bleeding in the lungs in infants. These case reports are rare and there is not enough information at this time to prove a connection.

If you think that your home may have *Stachybotrys*, you do NOT need to have it tested. ALL molds could possibly cause health problems, so they should all be cleaned and removed as soon as possible. *Stachybotrys* should be removed in the same way as any other type of mold.

I am pregnant and there is mold in my home. Is my baby at risk?

There are no human studies looking at exposure to mold during pregnancy. Studies in animals have shown that the substances that molds produce may increase the risk of birth defects. These studies may not apply to humans because the animals were exposed to these substances in a very different way than a human might be exposed.

If you are pregnant and you have found mold in your home, you should have it removed as soon as possible. Talk to your doctor if you are experiencing any illness that you think could be from mold exposure.

What if there is mold in my home while I'm breastfeeding?

There are no studies looking at exposure to mold during breastfeeding. Because mold in the home may possibly make both the mother and baby sick, it should be removed from the home as soon as possible.

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If you have questions about the information on this fact sheet or other exposures during pregnancy, call OTIS at 1-866-626-6847.