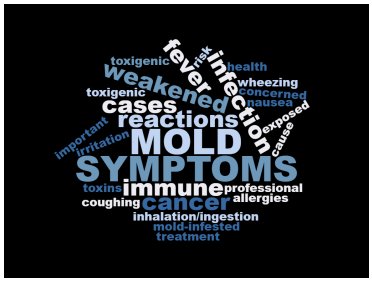
TOOLBOX TALK #19

WHAT IS MOLD? HEALTH CONCERNS – PART 3

Symptoms of mold exposure can include sore throat, sneezing, runny nose, eye irritation, congestion and skin rash. Employees should have a method to report health concerns to supervisors or management. Employer need to also follow up on any reports by taking prompt steps to identify and correct any issues, including ones involving moisture intrusion. Advise any employee who has developed persistent or worsening symptoms to see a doctor or health care provider.



A published study links exposure to mold/dampness to:

- Upper respiratory tract symptoms
- Lower respiratory symptoms (coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath)
- Asthma development and exacerbation
- Respiratory infections
- Allergic rhinitis
- Bronchitis
- Eczema

Health issues also may arise because certain molds can also produce mycotoxins – a naturally occurring toxic substance. However, EPA says mold in a building does NOT necessarily mean that mycotoxins are present. Individual differences can mean two people aren't affected in the same way by mold and other factors include how much and how long of an exposure.

Another potential difficulty is determining work-relatedness of a mold-based illness. With mold all around us, symptoms can stem from issues in the home or even the car. That's why it's important to do your inspections. Following up with an affected employee is critical as well so you know if the remediation has actually worked.

Bottom line is that employers are required to provide a safe and healthful working environment. Mold in the workplace can and will disrupt this requirement and must be addressed.