Q&As Regarding Mold and Moisture

What is Mold?
Molds are part of the natural environment. Molds are fungi that can be found anywhere - inside or outside - throughout the year. About 1,000 species of mold can be found in the United States, with more than 100,000 known species worldwide.

What do they do?
Outdoors, molds play an important role in nature by breaking down organic matter such as toppled trees, fallen leaves, and dead animals. We would not have food and medicines, like cheese and penicillin, without mold.

Indoors, mold growth should be avoided. Problems may arise when mold starts eating away at materials, affecting the look, smell, and possibly, with the respect to wood-framed buildings, affecting the structural integrity of the buildings.

Where does mold grow?
Molds can grow on virtually any substance, as long as moisture or water, oxygen, and an organic source are present. Molds reproduce by creating tiny spores (viable seeds) that usually cannot be seen without magnification. Mold spores continually float through the indoor and outdoor air.

Is mold a problem?
Molds are usually not a problem unless mold spores land on a damp spot and begin growing. They digest whatever they land on in order to survive. There are molds that grow on wood, paper, carpet, foods and insulation, while other molds eat everyday dust and dirt that gather in the moist regions of a building.

How can you prevent mold?
When excessive moisture or water accumulates indoors, mold growth often will occur, particularly if the moisture problem remains uncorrected. While it is impossible to eliminate all molds and mold spores, controlling moisture can control indoor mold growth.

All molds share the characteristic of being able to grow without sunlight; mold needs only a viable seed (spore), a nutrient source, moisture, and the right temperature to proliferate. This explains why mold infestation is often found in damp, dark, hidden spaces; light and air circulation dry areas out, making them less hospitable for mold.

Since mold requires water to grow, it is important to prevent excessive moisture in buildings. Other moisture problems may result from roof leaks, landscaping or gutters that direct water into or under a building, or unvented furnaces or dryers.
How does mold affect my health?
According to the American Society of Safety Engineers, current research does not conclusively indicate that mold causes illness in the normal, healthy working population, however there is some evidence that excessive exposure to mold may aggravate pre-existing respiratory conditions such as asthma and may cause allergic reactions in some people including hay fever-type symptoms such as runny nose and red eyes.

How do I know if there is mold inside my home?
There are no federal standards or recommendations, (e.g., OSHA, NIOSH, EPA) for airborne concentrations of mold or mold spores. It is more prudent to remediate any identified mold problem rather than to conduct extensive testing to determine the species and concentration of the mold contamination.

Can I sample for mold?
As there are no standards for “acceptable” levels of mold in buildings, and the lack of a definitive connection between exposure levels and health effects makes interpreting the data difficult. It is more important to remove the mold and solve the moisture problem that causes the moldy conditions than to undertake extensive testing for the type and quantity of mold.

Sampling for mold should be conducted by professionals. Types of samples can include: air samples, surface samples, and bulk samples.
Tips for Preventing Mold and Mildew

_A Guide for Residents of Our Community_

- Do not block or cover any heating, ventilation, or air conditioning ducts.

- Whenever possible, maintain a temperature in your home between 70 and 76 degrees in the air conditioning season and 65 to 74 degrees Fahrenheit during the heating season.

- To allow an exchange of air and permit sunlight to enter your home, air out your home when weather is warm and humidity is low. Run the fan on your furnace to help circulate fresh air.

- In damp, humid, or rainy weather, keep windows and doors closed.

- Clean and dust your home on a regular basis. Use environmentally safe household cleaners.

- Regular vacuuming and mopping removes household dirt and debris that contribute to mold growth. A vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter will help remove mold spores.

- Periodically clean and dry the walls and floors around the sink, bathtub, shower, toilet, windows, and patio doors using a common household disinfecting cleaner. On a regular basis, wipe down and dry areas where moisture sometimes accumulates, such as countertops, windows, and windowsills.

- Use the bathroom fan when bathing or showering and allow the fan to run until all excess moisture has been vented from the bathroom.

- Use the exhaust fan in your kitchen when cooking or while the dishwasher is running and allow the fan to run until all excess moisture has been vented from the kitchen.

- If you have a clothes dryer in your unit, clean the lint filter after each use and promptly report any damage to the vent connection. If condensation forms within the closet, wipe it dry. Dry damp clothing as quickly as possible.

- Limit houseplants to a reasonable number to limit excess humidity in your home and limit molds that could grow on the solid surface. Avoid over watering.

- If you clean up a spill on your carpeting, blot the area dry.

- Do not overfill closets or storage areas. Overcrowding restricts airflow.
What to report to the Balfour Beatty Communities Management Office

1. Any leak or water damage
2. Any malfunction in your heating, ventilation, or air conditioning system
3. Windows or doors that don’t open or close properly
4. Any areas of visible mold (except very small areas that respond to routine cleaning)
5. Musty or moldy odors
6. Health issues which you think are linked to the air quality within your home.

How to report to the Balfour Beatty Communities Management Office

- Any resident with these types of issues and concerns should contact the Work Order office at 706-772-9562.
- These types of issues are considered Priority Urgent and our Community Manager and Facility Manager will quickly respond to perform an assessment of the home.

Our Commitment

We, at Balfour Beatty Communities, truly care about the health and safety of our residents. We are very serious about addressing moisture, water damage and mold issues and concerns and have procedures in place to handle such matters.