

## What is mold-related hypersensitivity pneumonitis?

Mold-related hypersensitivity pneumonitis (HP) is a form of interstitial lung disease (ILD) caused by a reaction to inhalation of mold particles (spores, mold fragments, and mold-containing dusts) in the environment. Even though it is caused by mold, it is not an infection and is not contagious. Instead, it is the body's allergic and inflammatory responses to the mold that causes the disease. In general, it is very rare to develop hypersensitivity pneumonitis from mold and small amounts of mold likely do not cause disease. When patients with HP have a large amount of mold in the home, a physician may recommend removing mold through a process of mold remediation. Certain types of bacteria can also grow in damp environments and can contribute to breathing problems as well.

## How do I know if there is a mold problem in my home?

Mold growth in the home occurs when there is an excessive moisture problem, generally the result of rainwater intrusion, plumbing leaks, or condensation on cold-water plumbing pipes. Porous materials such as dry wall, ceiling tiles, and plywood sub-flooring are particularly susceptible to mold growth when water damage occurs. The presence of a musty odor can be an indication of a hidden mold problem. Mold growth can also sometimes occur on furnishings and storage items in basements with high levels of humidity. Forced air HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) systems are a very common but under-recognized location for mold growth.

## Do I need to sample my environment for mold?

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends that since you can see mold, sampling is unnecessary. There are also no standards that exist for measuring the quantity of mold or mold spore, or how much mold is too much. However, sampling surfaces for mold may be helpful to see if an area has been thoroughly cleaned after mold growth is detected. In general if sampling is done, it should comply with the methods outlined by professional organizations such as the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) and/or the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH).

## Can removing airborne mold help to treat HP?

Removing mold exposure may lead to the resolution of HP and help lung function to return to normal in cases of acute or chronic nonfibrotic mold-related HP (HP without scarring of the lungs). Patients with established scarring of the lungs due to mold or fibrotic mold-related HP do not always improve with mold remediation or removal; some patients may experience some improvement while others will simply stabilize and/or stop progressing. Unfortunately, in some cases fibrosis or scarring may progress even after removing the mold exposure.

## Do I need to hire a professional for mold remediation?

While many official guidance documents suggest that areas with less than 10 square feet of visible mold growth can be remediated by a homeowner without professional assistance, we recommend that patients with HP do not perform any mold remediation themselves. We also recommend that patients and their families hire professional remediators for areas greater than 10 square feet and consider hiring even for less than 10 square feet of visible mold growth. If you do hire a contractor or another professional, we would recommend that you check references and make sure they are following the guidelines of professional organizations such as the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH) or the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA).

## What are the steps for home mold remediation?

When mold remediation is performed, the steps generally include:

<b>Step 1</b>	Identify and correct ongoing sources of water or moisture.
<b>Step 2</b>	Check air ducts and the heating and cooling system.
<b>Step 3</b>	Select containment equipment and protective gear.
<b>Step 4</b>	Remove water-damaged or moldy materials that cannot be cleaned and clean items that can be salvaged.
<b>Step 5</b>	Ensure that no further water damage is occurring and restore the area.

For more information on mold remediation, please see the [Environmental Protection Agency website \(Mold Cleanup in Your Home | US EPA\)](#).

### For more information:

#### [Mold-related hypersensitivity pneumonitis fact sheet](#)

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) website: [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency | US EPA](#)

American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH) website: [Home | ACGIH](#)

American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) website: [Homepage | AIHA](#)

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Mridu Gulati, MD, MPH  
Associate Director, Yale Center for Interstitial Lung Disease, a PFF Care Center Network Site  
New Haven, CT

Traci N. Adams, MD  
University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center Interstitial Lung Disease Program, a PFF Care Center Network Site  
Dallas, TX

Mark Robertshaw, MD  
Pulmonary Fellow, University of Texas Southwestern  
Dallas, TX

Amy Hajari Case, MD, FCCP  
Piedmont Healthcare, a PFF Care Center Network Site  
Atlanta, Georgia  
PFF Senior Medical Advisor, Education and Awareness