



# Tri-County Health Department

Serving Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties

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Executive Director

## Health Advisory

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### Mold: Recommendation For When to Conduct Air Sampling

Tri-County Health Department typically recommends that air sampling for mold **not** be done. We usually advise that the problem causing the water leak be corrected and the mold cleaned up. There are many disadvantages to conducting air sampling for mold:

- There are no health standards available for mold exposure to tell us what is a safe exposure level for humans.
- Spore concentrations can vary widely throughout a day, making data interpretation difficult, especially if an insufficient number of samples is collected.
- The chance for false negatives is high. This means mold is present in the environment, but is not picked up by the air samples. Negative mold sample results do not necessarily indicate that there is no mold inside the structure. It is possible that at the time of sampling, the molds weren't producing spores. (It is the mold spores that are collected during sampling.)
- Mold air sampling is very expensive. Costs start at about \$400 and can easily range into the thousands.

Although there are no health standards, guidelines are available that help determine when mold concentrations inside a space may be considered elevated. There are occasions when mold air sampling might be warranted:

- To document concentrations for a legal or workers compensation case
- To identify the presence of a specific species of mold
- To determine if mold spores growing in an unoccupied area of a building, for example, in the crawlspace or behind drywall, have migrated to the occupied area of the structure.

If sampling is warranted, there are recommended sampling procedures. Settling plates (for example, home test kits available at hardware stores) are a passive sampling technique, which is not an accepted method to conduct mold spore sampling. The accepted method involves using air sampling pumps to pull a known quantity of air across the sampling media in order to quantify the amount of mold in the air. Also an outdoor air sample should always be collected in conjunction with samples from the interior areas of concern. The outdoor sample serves as a baseline for the concentration and genera of mold we would expect to find inside the building.

**If you have questions** please contact your state or local health department:

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment:

(303) 692-2700 / (303) 370-9395 (after hours)

Fax: (303) 782-0338

Tri-County Health Department:

(303) 220-9200 / 303-461-2342 (after hours)

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