We May Not Love The Humidity But They Do

They have their place: without them our environment would be full of dead plant matter. But molds and humans don't always coexist well.

Fungi (the broader category of molds, rusts, yeasts, even mushrooms) are everywhere, growing on any organic substance, as long as they have moisture and oxygen. They reproduce with microscopic-sized spores (like plants produce seeds). Spores travel in the air and settle on surfaces where they grow by digesting all kinds of materials—wood, paper, carpet, foods [1].

Human health can be affected by fungi, with our reactions dependent on the type of fungi, the extent of our exposure, and individual sensitivity. Workers in a mold-contaminated environment may report not only odors but headaches, breathing problems, skin irritation, allergic reactions, or aggravated asthma. Besides affecting the workers, fungi may also damage buildings and furnishings as they gradually destroy the materials they're growing on [2].

Moisture control is the key to mold control. If flooding, leaks, or inadequate humidification systems have produced dampness or high humidity, a remediation plan will be needed. The CDC recommends mold removal based simply on seeing or smelling it (identifying the particular type of mold is unnecessary) [3]. Basically a remediation plan will assess the magnitude of the fungi problem, fix the moisture problem, and contain and remove the moldy materials, while protecting all remediation workers and other occupants of the work space [4, 5].

To sum up, Spores + Moisture + Oxygen = Fungi growth, but a thorough remediation plan that eliminates and controls humidity helps to protect worker health.

1 - US Environmental Protection Agency (Mold and Moisture) - www.epa.gov/iedmold1/
2 - EPA (Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings-Appendix B) - www.epa.gov/iedmold1/append_b.html
3 - National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health - www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/indoorenv/
4 - EPA (Investigating, Evaluating, and Remediating Moisture and Mold Problems) - www.epa.gov/iedmold1/i-e-r.html
5 - EPA (checklist for mold remediation) - www.epa.gov/iedmold1/checklist.html