

Home Mold Inspections: How to Use House Test Kits to Locate & Get Rid of Black or Toxic Fungus

By Mold Medical Expert Dr. Donald Dennis, M.D.,F.A.C.S.- November 12, 2011

What are you waiting for? You have been miserable for years with repeated sinus problems. You know that mold is a contributing factor in 93% of Chronic Sinusitis cases. You can smell that there is a problem in your house. Isn't it time you find out for sure if you need to get rid of mold?

Take the first step and get tested. It's easy. There are several companies that offer home mold inspections test kits. You can get them online or at big box home improvement stores.

How to Use Your Test Kit

Ideally, what you want are Sabouraud Dextrose Agar test plates. This type of plate provides the most accurate reading because it has a living media coating that traps and helps to incubate the mold spores. Keep in mind that these plates expire after about 8 weeks so you will want to keep them refrigerated for freshness until you are ready to use them. The plates will expire prematurely if not refrigerated.

Before you open your plates there are a few things you should do to get ready. What you are trying to avoid is cross contamination. That is when you get mold into your plates from a source other than the one you are testing.

Preparation Tips:

1. Start by considering where to you want to test. If you have an area that you suspect is a problem, like the basement, plan to set plates in different areas on that level.
2. Don't forget to test areas all over the house. You will want to use a couple of plates to check areas away from the problem area, like the third floor, to see if the mold problem has spread.
3. Before placing plates, wash your hands and wrists to remove any spores that may be on your skin that could fall into the plates.
4. If your test kit provides gloves use those as a further barrier to cross contamination.
5. Wait to open the actual plates until you are ready to place them.

When you are ready to test you will open the plate and place it with the insides facing up on the testing surface.

What you are testing is the level of mold that is present in the air. Most tests require a one hour exposure to get a proper sample. After the exposure period you need to seal up the

plates and write the date and the room that they were tested in on outside of the plate.

Testing Specific Objects

Have you gotten a used couch from Aunt Sally and ever since it arrived you have not felt well? It may have become contaminated at her house or during transportation and has become a mold machine. Pets that spend time outdoors can also be a big problem. You can test specific objects or even pets with a "Tap Test". Simply place the test plate (The Dextrose Agar half) against the object you wish to test and tap it several time to shake loose mold spores that are resting on the surface. You will want to position the plate so that spores that come loose can fall into the plate. In this case, you are testing the collected amount of spores on the surface of the object or pet in question, therefore it does not require the one hour exposure and can be sealed up right away.

After Testing

If your test kit is the kind that requires shipping to a lab do that immediately. Waiting days to ship them will allow for overgrowth that throws off your readings.

If you have a Do-It-Yourself kit, keep the plates in a warm place for 5 days and then check them. Remember, after the first week overgrowth will start as the mold sporates and it will throw off your reading.

How to Read Results

During the incubation period mold captured in the plate will grow into small, round cultures of varying size. Each culture is to be counted. The severity of your problems is ranked as follows:

- 1 to 2 cultures** – low risk of inflammation
3 to 5 cultures – moderate risk of inflammation for low sensitivity sufferers. There is a high risk of inflammation for severe sufferers.
6 to 10 cultures – High risk of inflammation to all sufferers.
10 to Too Numerous to Count - risk to both sufferers and non-sufferers for auto-immune diseases.

Once you know where you have a problem you can use a number of different self or professional treatment solutions to clean up the source of your Chronic Sinusitis. It is up to you to take the first step to get on the road to recovery.