

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# What's the Deal with Mold?

By Lydia Lukidis

If you leave a sandwich outside for several days, it will start to look and smell funky. White fuzz begins to form, then it gets bigger and turns black. This is commonly known as mold. But what is that weird stuff anyway, and where does it come from?

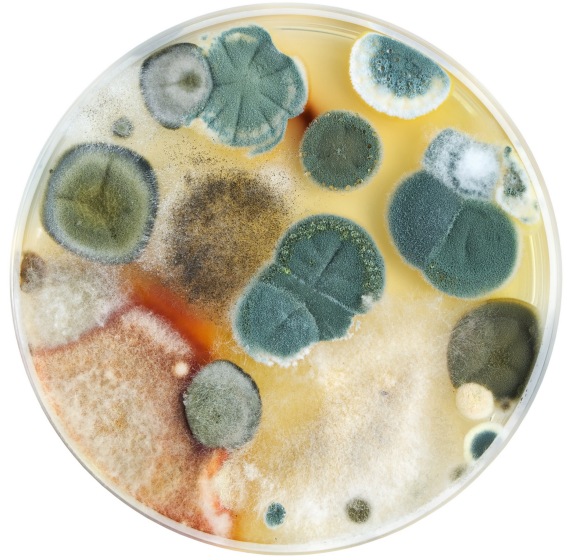
Mold is a type of fungus. If you're wondering what fungus is, it's a living thing that's not a plant or animal. Mushrooms are another type of fungus. And imagine this, there are literally thousands of different kinds of mold.

There's everything from fuzzy white mold to dark blue spotted mold. Some molds have funny names like "Scopulariopsis" and "Aureobasidium."

Mold can grow in any part of the world, both inside or outside. Especially in wet areas. If you've ever wondered where it comes from, the answer may surprise you. Mold comes from the air. There are millions of little mold cells floating around in the air. These are called mold spores. If these spores land on a host, like a sandwich, they will "eat" the bread. The spores grow by feeding off the bread. They produce chemicals that break the bread down. Eventually, the sandwich rots.

Mold can be harmful at times. For example, some types of mold can form in the house. It is common for mold to form on drywall, or behind the walls. It can also grow on the ceiling or near the windows. Many molds are harmless. But others can release toxic fumes, like black mold. These are dangerous to smell. Also, some people have allergies and sensitivities. They can get very sick if they breathe in certain other types of mold.

As for the molds that grow on food, they're not good to eat. Think about it, would



you want to eat a sandwich that's been growing mold for a week? Probably not. If you did, you may get sick. The mold is breaking down the food to the point of being rotten.

But there are a few exceptions when it comes to eating mold. For example, blue cheese has patches of blue mold in it. But it's okay to eat it. And the flavor of some hard cheeses is better once the outer layer has mold on it. You don't eat the mold, but if you cut it off, you can eat the rest of the cheese.

Although you may find mold gross, it can also be useful. There is a special kind of mold that is used to make penicillin. Penicillin is a medicine. It's a common antibiotic used for many diseases like strep throat.

Mold is also part of our cycle of life. In a natural environment, rotting things return to the soil. That provides food for the other plants to grow. Every little thing, including mold, has a purpose in nature.

## About the Author



Lydia Lukidis is a published children's author with a multi-disciplinary background that spans the fields of literature, theater, and puppetry.

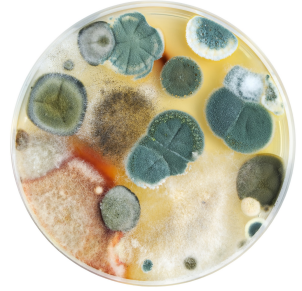
Lydia's picture book, *Gerbs in the House: The Dilly Dally Bedtime Routine*, is now available. Find out if Mocha will ever get his silly son to sleep!

Lukidis, Lydia. *Gerbs in the House: The Dilly Dally Bedtime Routine* ISBN: 978-0-9917402-7-7

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1. Choose the statement about mold that is true.
  - a. Mold is a type of plant.
  - b. Mold is a type of animal.
  - c. Mold is a living thing that is neither a plant nor an animal.
  - d. Mold is a nonliving thing.
  
2. Where does mold grow?
  - a. On food that has been left out for too long
  - b. Behind walls and near windows
  - c. Neither **a** nor **b**
  - d. Both **a** and **b**
  
3. Put a check mark () next to the statements about mold that are true.
  - There are about one hundred different types of mold in existence.
  - There are thousands of types of mold in existence.
  - All mold looks white and fuzzy.
  - Mold can come in a variety of colors, such as white, green, blue, and black.
  
4. In most cases, you don't want to eat mold because it could be harmful to your body. Give one example from the text of when you **can** eat mold.  

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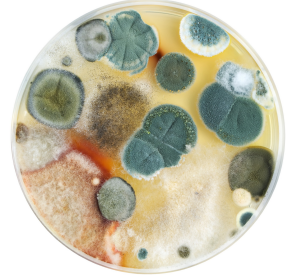
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5. What are mold spores?  

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Match each vocabulary word from the article with the correct definition.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. environment

a. dangerous; likely to cause harm

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. fungus

b. a type of medicine that kills harmful bacteria in the body

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. wondered

c. dirt or earth

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. harmful

d. the body's overreaction to pollen, fur, or other substances

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. soil

e. the surroundings in which an animal or plant lives

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. toxic

f. thought about or showed curiosity about something

\_\_\_\_\_ 7. allergies

g. decayed

\_\_\_\_\_ 8. antibiotic

h. make or create

\_\_\_\_\_ 9. rotten

i. a type of organism that falls into the same group as mold, mushrooms, or toadstools

\_\_\_\_\_ 10. produce

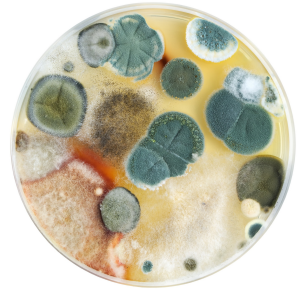
j. poisonous



# ANSWER KEY

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- Choose the statement about mold that is true. **c**
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  - Mold is a living thing that is neither a plant nor an animal.**
  - Mold is a nonliving thing.
- Where does mold grow? **d**
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  - Both a and b**
- Put a check mark () next to the statements about mold that are true.
  - There are about one hundred different types of mold in existence.
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  - All mold looks white and fuzzy.
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- In most cases, you don't want to eat mold because it could be harmful to your body. Give one example from the text of when you **can** eat mold.

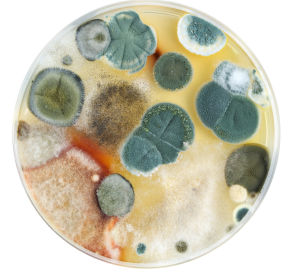
**You can eat blue cheese, which has mold on it.**  
**(Also accept: You can eat some hard cheeses with mold once the outer layer is removed.)**
- What are mold spores?

**Mold spores are little mold cells that float around in the air.**

# ANSWER KEY

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Match each vocabulary word from the article with the correct definition.

- |          |                |           |                                                                                     |
|----------|----------------|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>e</b> | 1. environment | <b>a.</b> | dangerous; likely to cause harm                                                     |
| <b>i</b> | 2. fungus      | <b>b.</b> | a type of medicine that kills harmful bacteria in the body                          |
| <b>f</b> | 3. wondered    | <b>c.</b> | dirt or earth                                                                       |
| <b>a</b> | 4. harmful     | <b>d.</b> | the body's overreaction to pollen, fur, or other substances                         |
| <b>c</b> | 5. soil        | <b>e.</b> | the surroundings in which an animal or plant lives                                  |
| <b>j</b> | 6. toxic       | <b>f.</b> | thought about or showed curiosity about something                                   |
| <b>d</b> | 7. allergies   | <b>g.</b> | decayed                                                                             |
| <b>b</b> | 8. antibiotic  | <b>h.</b> | make or create                                                                      |
| <b>g</b> | 9. rotten      | <b>i.</b> | a type of organism that falls into the same group as mold, mushrooms, or toadstools |
| <b>h</b> | 10. produce    | <b>j.</b> | poisonous                                                                           |