



Foods Rich in Mold Protein Allergens

Molds belong to the fungus family of organisms and live almost anywhere. Molds prefer warm and moist environments, but some will also grow in cooler temperatures (e.g. refrigerator, cellar). Some molds produce toxins, called mycotoxins.^{1,2} One such toxin, aflatoxin, has been shown to cause cancer and is most commonly found in peanuts and corn.²

Molds and mycotoxins can cause adverse symptoms ranging from mild to severe, depending on the person. Some common symptoms include itching, watery eyes, fatigue, and breathing difficulty.² All individuals should limit their exposure to mold. However, those who have adverse symptoms may need to be more aggressive about avoiding foods and other common mold exposures.

Molds like aspergillus are often used to make medications, vitamins, enzymes and food products (soy sauce, miso, bread, etc.).³ It is unknown how much of the mold antigen is present in the final product. If you have concerns about mold in specific products, talk to your Functional Medicine provider for personalized guidance.

Foods commonly contaminated with mold

Grains	corn, sorghum, wheat, rice and breads made from these
Nuts	peanut, pistachio, almond, walnut, Brazil nut, hazelnut, and coconut
Fruit	dried and overripe fruits, fruit juice, tomato, lemons, jams and jellies
Cheese	Roquefort, blue, Gorgonzola, Stilton, Brie, Camembert
Processed meats	bologna, lunch meats, bacon, hamburger, salami, hot dogs, sausage
Beer	most common in home-brewed, fruit varieties

Tips for reducing exposure to mold and mycotoxins in food:

- Purchase small amounts frequently.
- Discard any grains, nuts, or dried fruit that looks discolored, unusual, or moldy.
- Make sure that food is stored properly in a dry place and at a moderate temperature.
- Do not keep food for extended periods of time. Read the “best buy” or “use by” dates.
- Eat a diverse diet to reduce exposure and increase variety of nutrients.
- Keep bread in the freezer.
- Eat or freeze leftovers as soon as possible.

References

1. World Health Organization. Mycotoxins. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mycotoxins>. Updated May 2018. Accessed March 23, 2020.
2. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service. Molds on Food: Are they Dangerous? https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/a87cdc2c-6ddd-49f0-bd1f-393086742e68/Molds_on_Food.pdf?MOD=AJPERES. Revised August 2013. Accessed March 23, 2020.
3. Aspergillus & Aspergillosis Website. Food Allergies and Fungus. <https://aspergillosis.org/food-allergies-and-fungus/>. Accessed March 23, 2020.

