

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.

Unknowingly Consuming Mold?

Mold like *Aspergillus* is 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.

Following is a list of foods commonly contaminated with mold. If you have concerns about mold in specific foods or products, talk to your functional medicine provider for personalized guidance.

Foods Commonly Contaminated with Mold	
Grains:	corn, sorghum, wheat, rice, and bread made from these grains
Nuts:	peanut, pistachio, almond, walnut, Brazil nut, hazelnut, coconut
Fruit:	dried or overripe fruit, fruit juice, tomato, lemon, jam, jelly
Cheese:	blue, Brie, Camembert, Gorgonzola, Roquefort, Stilton
Processed meat:	lunch meat, bacon, bologna, salami, hot dogs, sausage
Beer:	most common in home-brewed, fruit varieties

Tips to Reduce Exposure to Mold and Mycotoxins in Food

- Shop more frequently so you can purchase smaller amounts.
- Discard any grains, nuts, or dried fruits that look discolored, unusual, or moldy.
- Make sure food is stored properly in a dry place and at a moderate temperature.
- Do not keep food for extended periods of time. Check the “best buy” or “use by” date.
- Eat a diverse diet to reduce exposure and increase the 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/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/molds-food-are-they-dangerous>. Revised August 22, 2013. Accessed March 23, 2020.
3. Aspergillus Patients and Carers. Food allergies and fungus. <https://aspergillus.org/food-allergies-and-fungus/>. Accessed March 23, 2020.

