

Fungi

What are Fungi?

Fungi are plantlike living things that do not contain chlorophyll. Fungi cannot move from place to place like plants. Unlike plants fungi cannot make its own food to get energy fungi must take in food. Fungi can be both harmful and helpful. They need moisture and warmth to grow.

Four types of common fungi are:

Mushroom, mold, yeast and mildew

Mushrooms

Mushroom grow on the ground, on fallen logs and on live trees. Mushrooms do not make their own food. Mushrooms growing on live trees are parasites. A **parasite** is an organism that depends on another organism for food and protection. Mushrooms growing on fallen logs act as decomposers. **Decomposers** are creatures that eat dead and decaying materials. They break everything down so that it can be used again. People use some mushrooms as food, but some mushrooms are deadly poison. Mushrooms sold in stores are safe to eat; however, you should not touch or eat wild mushrooms.



Mold

Mold is another fungus that is a parasite. They do not make their own food. They get their food from their surroundings. Molds grow on bread, fruit, or in any damp warm area. The mold that grows on an orange is used to produce the antibiotic penicillin. If you enjoy biting into a nice, fluffy piece of bread, you can thank that.



Yeast

If you enjoy biting into a nice fluffy piece of bread, you can thank the yeast that helped the bread rise. Yes, yeast is a fungus. When the yeast uses sugar, carbon dioxide gas is formed. The carbon dioxide gas is formed. The carbon dioxide makes the bread rise.



Mildew

Mildew grows on damp cloth, leather or on plants. Mildew growing on leaves can damage the plant. Some fungi are helpful, but others are harmful. Helpful fungi break down decaying matter (mushroom). Many products are made with fungi. Fungi help to give cheese its flavor, colour, and texture. Some types of fungi cause human diseases that affect the skin. Athlete's foot is caused by a fungus that grows between the toes. A fungus also causes ringworm and shifting clouds. Most fungi have one cell., but mushrooms have many cells. Plants grow from seeds, but fungi grow from spores.



Helpful Fungi

- ▶ Bacteria are used to ferment milk as part of the cheese making process.
- ▶ Yeast ferments the carbohydrates found in grapes to make alcoholic wine.
- ▶ Yoghurt is made using milk that has been soured by bacteria
- ▶ Yeast is added to bread dough to make it rise.
- ▶ Microorganisms feed on leaves, plants and other matter, decomposing it and creating compost.
- ▶ Antibiotics are used to kill bacteria that cause infections. They are created from fungi such as penicillium.

Harmful Fungi

- ▶ Shifting clouds
- ▶ Athlete's foot
- ▶ Ringworm
- ▶ Food poisoning
- ▶ Cause rot and contamination of food, lumber and paper