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Mold Allergy

Molds are simple plants in a group called fungi. They are microscopic in size and unlike other plants are unable to produce their own food from air or sunlight. Molds live on plant or animal matter that they break down for nourishment.

Molds can be found outdoors and indoors. It is the mold spores in the air, which cause allergy symptoms in susceptible individuals. Outside, dried leaves, grass and vegetation, such as gardens, barns, & mulch beds provide an ideal medium for molds to grow. Indoors, mold prefers rooms that are damp, have poor ventilation and little light. Whenever the ideal situations exist mold settles on objects from which they can get the nourishment to grow and produce mildew. A few such places in the house are furnace and air conditioner filters, houseplants, the drip pan under the refrigerators, wet shower stalls, etc. Molds like paper products, wood, leather, paint and plastics.

Once you have determined that you are dealing with mildew it is important to kill the growth as quickly as possible. Mildew can be removed by cleaning the affected area using a solution containing three heaping tablespoons of sodium phosphate (can be found in paint stores), and one and a half cups of bleach mixed in one gallon of water. The affected surface should be thoroughly scrubbed with this solution using a soft brush and then rinsing the entire area well with water and allowing drying completely. Wallpaper pastes with mold inhibitor exist as do specially prepared house paints that are mildew resistant. Mold can be reduced within the house by limiting the number of indoor plants as these contribute to the growth of indoor mildew. Keeping the humidity down by using a dehumidifier will help to reduce moisture. The water in the dehumidifier should be emptied frequently and the equipment cleansed with bleach solution to prevent mold growth.

Tips to Reduce Household Mold

- Avoid keeping houseplants.
- Avoid carpet on concrete.
- Avoid keeping cut wood in the home.
- Cover registers with filters.
- Use household cleaners specially formulated to eliminate mold and mildew.
- Replace old wallpaper with non-toxic, latex paint.
- Remove carpet and bath mats from the bathroom. Wash towels often.
- Avoid live Christmas trees in the home. Artificial trees should be bagged and stored in areas of medium humidity.
- Do not steam clean carpets and furniture
- Set car air conditioner to bring in outside air, not on “recirculation”.
- Empty and clean garbage containers frequently
- Check stored foods for possible spoilage and mold growth.

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- Encase mattress in impermeable zippered covers. Foam rubber pillows and mattresses are particularly likely to become moldy.
- Mold grows well in closets, which are damp and dark. Dry shoes and boots thoroughly before storing. A low watt light bulb left on in a closed closet can prevent mold growth.
- Good quality HEPA air cleaners can remove mild spores from the air. Inexpensive tabletop air cleaners are not effective.
- Vent the clothes dryer to the outdoors. Dry clothing immediately after washing.
- Correct drainage problems near the house, as pooled water greatly increases mold formation.
- Allow your home to breathe. Avoid heavy vegetation around and over you house as it encourages dampness and mold growth.
- Remove carpeting from bedroom