

Is Your Home Making You Sick?

Just how safe are our homes that we live in each day? We may have cans of discarded paint tucked away in the garage, forgotten chemical fertilizers stored in the basement, and outdated household cleaners stored under the sink, confirming the old adage 'out of sight, out of mind'. However, once we've removed these from our homes the impact of further pollution is removed. But what about the invisible dangers lurking within our homes that we may be unaware of?

Let's face it, we live in a beautiful part of the world. The West Coast in all its glory is known for its beautiful mountains and green forests. What makes those forests so green? Rain, rain and more rain! And while this rain keeps us hydrated and healthy, it can definitely have an affect on our home's health. If moisture is an issue inside your home, mold may be present and lurking even if you can't physically see it. Could mold in your home be making you sick? You may be suffering from symptoms and never question that mold might be the culprit.

Mold will grow above 60% humidity. If you keep your home between 40-60% humidity, your chance of having mold decreases. If you use a woodstove in your home during the winter chances are it is usually dry enough to keep the mold growth down. When you stop using the woodstove, the humidity in the house will go up.

Generally if there is mold outside, it will find its way in. If conditions are right, it will grow. Damp areas inside create the ideal living space for mold.

There are things you can do right now to decrease and prevent mold from becoming a problem:

Buy a humidity meter. If your humidity is above 60% consistently, you need a dehumidifier. Keep the dust down.

If moisture is present, dust and pet dander create a place for mold to grow. If you are considering buying new flooring, consider hardwood. Dust shows up easily and therefore can be quickly swept up, eliminating potential problems down the road. When installing flooring, make sure to use non-toxic glue or buy click flooring, which doesn't require any glue.

If you see visible mold on window sills or walls, DO NOT use bleach to clean it. This can create a more toxic environment. Bleach is hazardous to your health and has been linked to the rising rates of breast cancer in women, reproductive problems in men, and learning and behavioural problems in children.

A better solution would be to mix 20 drops of Tea Tree oil (*Melaleuca Alternifolia*) with ½ cup of water. You can also use a 3-4% sodium carbonate (also known as soda ash or washing soda) solution in hot water. Clean area with scrub brush and mixture. Wear rubber gloves and a disposable mask.

Symptoms related to mold include:

Allergies, asthma, sinus infections, respiratory problems and headaches.

Mold can also increase symptoms of:

Fibromyalgia and Multiple Sclerosis.

Some people are more sensitive to mold than others and it might be in your best interest to have a professional clean it for you. If you suspect you may have a mold problem, contact a professional.

Kyla Mortil is a Building Biology Environmental Consultant and has been in the health care industry for fourteen years. She inspects homes for mold, air quality and electromagnetic frequencies. www.enviro-ops.com 250-743-8387

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