



MOLD, MILDEW and BACTERIA

Varying degrees of these are found in every home. It is impossible to remove all of them from your home. You should be able to recognize the signs and causes of these pollutants and attempt to minimize or eliminate their access into and the duration they stay in your home.

We are constantly exposed to these biological pollutants in our every day lives. These pollutants effects on our health depend upon the type and amount of the pollutants present. Every person reacts differently. Some people may not experience any adverse health reactions from certain pollutants while others may react moderately or worse from the same exposure. Individuals at both ends of the age spectrum (the elderly and young) or with compromised immune systems or respiratory problems (e.g. Lupus, Asthma) are more vulnerable.

To understand how to control these biological pollutants, we need to know what we are dealing with. Mold and mildew are one-cell plant-like organisms that are of the Kingdom Fungi-microorganisms that lack chlorophyll and vascular tissue. This Kingdom includes yeasts, molds, mildew, and mushrooms. There are differences between mold and mildew, but the concerns are similar. Not all fungi-microorganisms are harmful as yeast and mushrooms are used in cooking products and are digestible.



Mold grows from spores that are everywhere in our environment. Normally these spores are inactive, but can germinate when the relative humidity exceeds 70 percent. Organic materials such as paper, books, cloth, drywall backing, wood and leather are the primary food source for Mold. Mildew is more a surface concern, growing on walls, siding, and other surfaces covered with a film of dirt containing organic matter that has been exposed to moisture. The likelihood of mold or mildew growth increases with temperatures above 65°F (18°C). Signs of mold and mildew include growths, discolored surfaces and odors. Homes exposed to flooding, water penetration, leakage problems, or high humidity conditions are especially susceptible.



Bacteria is another microorganism that can contaminate an air conditioning system or other moisture-laden areas. Bacterial growths account for most of the slime that clogs air conditioner drain pans and drain lines. Bacteria create the initial tacky coating on heat transfer surfaces that catch and hold dust and fibers, which can eventually lead to clogged coil passages.

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Uncovering fungi or bacteria conditions in a home is not simple or inexpensive. Although once a biological pollution condition is discovered, there are means to identify its cause, location and to eliminate it. Certain catastrophic events, such as flooding or serious water intrusion, can quickly lead to mold conditions unless prompt remedial action is initiated.



A home inspection does not include a specific investigation or identification of any environmental concerns including mold, mildew and bacteria. Mold testing may be an additional service offering. If there are concerns about the presence of molds, a qualified environmental specialist should be consulted for remediation methods and cost.

MOLD, MILDEW and BACTERIA (continued)

Fungi and bacteria will not survive without some type of moisture. To reduce the chances of any fungus or bacterium growth in your home, you must address conditions that contribute to water penetration and high humidity conditions. Here are some general recommendations to control moisture and help prevent the growth of fungi or other biological pollutants:

- Humidifiers (particularly reservoir, non-misting types) can promote mold and mildew growth and help spread spores throughout the house if not properly maintained. These units must be serviced regularly.
- Condensate collection pans under the indoor coil for air conditioning units provide a perfect environment for bacteria. Check and, if accessible, thoroughly bleach-clean them as needed.
- Ground water that is not directed away from your home may penetrate the foundation and/or the crawlspace walls and will provide mold and mildew spores with the moisture they require to thrive. Pipe downspouts away from the house. Maintain a positive grade around your foundation, and address any water penetration conditions immediately.
- Faulty or missing flashings allow rainwater to enter your home and settle in hidden areas such as attics and insulated roof or wall cavities. Check and maintain flashings annually.
- Unfinished, dirt-floor crawlspaces allow ground moisture to rise and permeate house framing and insulation. Such crawlspace surfaces should be sealed by placing polyethylene sheeting over them and taping all seams and edges. Keep crawlspaces well ventilated.
- Bathrooms and laundry areas, particularly if unventilated or poorly ventilated, encourage the growth of mold and mildew. Venting (including bathroom exhaust vents as well as dryer vents) should be piped to the outside and not to an interior area such as an attic or garage.
- Improperly vented fuel-burning appliances can raise the relative humidity in a room. Shut off offending appliances at first signs of condensation on windows or other surfaces and check venting systems to ensure all potentially harmful flue gas exhausts to the exterior.

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- Dehumidifiers and air conditioning can be used, especially in hot, humid areas, to draw moisture out of the air. Be sure these appliances don't themselves become sources of biological pollutants.
- Major systems, such as furnaces, heat pumps and central air conditioners, should be inspected and cleaned annually before seasonal use.
- Air Ducting can accumulate dirt and debris. Verify the cleaning method used and that there is protection from dislodged pollutants and chemicals used in the cleaning process.