



**A Closer
LOOK**
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Exposure to Toxic Mold a Concern for Homeowners; ASHI Recommends Tips to Help Protect Homes, Families

Recent findings of homes with toxic mold have many homeowners on alert. And it's no wonder, since several case reports have claimed that this house hazard can cause considerable health risks. That's why homeowners need to be aware of the dangers of mold, and what they can do to protect themselves and their investment, says the American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI).

“Mold has been around for years and is commonly found in homes,” explains Jim Hemsell, president of the Lone Star chapter of ASHI, the largest and most respected professional society for home inspectors in North America. “But while often harmless, too much of certain kinds of mold in a home can be dangerous. Mold always indicates excessive moisture and the source should be corrected immediately.”

According to Jim, molds naturally grow in the indoor environment and mold spores may also enter through open doorways, windows, heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems. But when mold spores drop in places where there is excess moisture and a food source such as common building materials, they will grow and often spread. This frequently happens where leakage may have occurred in roofs, pipes, walls, plant pots, or areas affected by a flood.



Jim also noted that if this mold growth is toxic or pathogenic, some people might experience health problems as a result. Health conditions have been found to include such symptoms as congestion, chronic fatigue, bloody noses and flu-like symptoms that won't go away.

“Because mold can grow in moist areas that are often undetected, it is important for homeowners to have their home evaluated for areas that may be troublesome,” adds Jim. “An ASHI inspection is an evaluation of the overall condition of a home and points out visual deterioration that exists throughout a house. This may alert a homeowner to problem areas that exist or sections of the home that may be susceptible to mold problems.”

Mold Control Tips

If a homeowner knows they have mold in their house, it is important to clean affected areas and eliminate sources of excess moisture. Additionally, to help prevent mold in the future, ASHI recommends the following:

1. Fix leaky plumbing, roof leaks or other sources of water immediately. Moisture saturation of insulation in wall cavities and attic spaces are major mold growth areas.
2. Wash mold off hard surfaces and dry completely. Absorbent materials, such as ceiling tiles and carpet, may have to be replaced.
3. Keep drip pans in your air conditioner, refrigerator and dehumidifier clean and dry.
4. Use exhaust fans or open windows in kitchens and bathrooms when showering, cooking or using the dishwasher.
5. Place vents for clothes dryers and bathroom exhaust fans outside the home.
6. Remove and replace flooded carpets and drywall.
7. Maintain low indoor humidity, ideally between 30-50% relative humidity. Humidity levels can be measured by hygrometers, which can often be found at local hardware stores.

8. Clean bathrooms with mold killing products.
9. When painting the home, add mold inhibitors to paint.
10. Do not carpet bathrooms.
11. If problem persists, or if anyone in the house is susceptible to mold and mildew, have the problem evaluated by an expert in mold/moisture intrusion.

For More Information

Homebuyers who wish to know more about the American Society of Home Inspectors or obtain the names of ASHI members near them may contact the organization at 932 Lee St., Suite 101, Des Plaines, IL 60016. Phone: 800-743-2744. Or visit the ASHI Web site at www.ashi.org.