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Mold 101

Mold is a fungus that can grow almost anywhere. Mold is made up of millions of tiny particles called spores, all growing together in a colony, and comes in a variety of colors, depending on the type. Although molds are always present in the air, those that cause mildew need moisture and certain temperatures in order to grow. Molds commonly develop in humid summer weather, especially in houses that are closed. Molds grow fastest at temperatures between 75°F and 85°F.

Many people have the impression that mold is annoying but harmless, yet it *can* be dangerous to your child's health. Tiny mold spores float through the air and can get trapped in your child's lungs, making it hard to breathe and causing possible asthma attacks in some children. Allergic reactions to mold are common and can include sneezing, a runny nose, red eyes and a skin rash.

Finding mold does not mean your house is not clean. Mold is there because of moisture. Molds grow wherever it is damp, warm, poorly lighted and/or where air is not circulated such as cellars, basements, crawl spaces, clothing closets, shower curtains, damp clothes, underneath carpets, behind wallpaper or furniture, curtains or rugs in basements or closed-in water pipe structures.

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FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

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Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) program staff at MSU Extension can answer questions or help you learn more about money management, parent, food, nutrition and health issues. MSU Extension educators integrate university and community resources to provide tools that help families succeed. For more information on FCS programs in Michigan, call your county MSU Extension office. Check the government pages of your phone book for contact information.

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Moisture control is the key to mold control; try to prevent moisture in the first place, whether it is by leak, condensation, excessive humidity or flooding. When water *does* leak or spill indoors – act quickly! Use these tips to safely clean up mold problems:

- Use disposable rubber gloves, goggles, masks, long sleeved shirts and pants to protect your skin, eyes and lungs.
- Open the windows near the cleaning area and run fans to help air it out and to help the surface dry.
- Use a non-ammonia soap or detergent in hot water and scrub the area. Use a stiff brush or cleaning pad on walls or uneven surfaces.
- Rinse the surface very well with hot water. A wet-dry vacuum is an easy way to pick up excess water.
- Disinfect the area with watered down chlorine bleach. Use about one cup bleach to ten cups of water. (DO NOT mix with ammonia or other chemicals). Using straight bleach will not be more effective in cleaning mold. Spot test to make sure the bleach will not discolor the surface to be cleaned.
- Dry the area for about two or three days. Raising the temperature and using fans or dehumidifiers will help.

Remember, if the area is cleaned but the moisture problem remains, the mold will return. By watching for moisture problems, taking care of them right away and cleaning moldy surfaces, you can stop mold from growing in your home.

For more information on this topic and other indoor air quality issues, contact the MSU Extension Office. MSU Extension Family and Consumer Science educators are located in all 83 Michigan counties to integrate university and community resources to help families succeed.

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References:

Home Safe Kids curriculum – MSU Extension

Help Yourself to a Healthy Home – University of Wisconsin

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