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MOLD - NOT A MAJOR HEALTH RISK! **MOLD TESTING OFTEN COSTLY AND UNNECESSARY**

MOLD CONTINUES TO BE A SUBJECT OF CONCERN for many homebuyers. Is this concern justified? EXCESSIVE mold can be a health hazard to SOME individuals, but people need not panic if mold is suspected in a home. Mold in homes is not a major environmental health issue. In a news release the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) supported a report from the Institute of Medicine (IOM) that made the above comments about the health risks of mold.



In a separate news release the Connecticut DPH, stated that “mold testing is often costly and unnecessary.” The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) makes similar statements about mold testing, saying that the “CDC does not recommend routine sampling for mold.”

Why then is there a public perception that mold is a significant health risk? Mold may not be an issue that comes up everyday with all of our clients. If mold is an issue, typically the client’s perception of mold comes from media sources. The media often focuses on stories of people claiming to have suffered significant and lasting health problems due to mold exposure. These stories have created undue concern in some of our clients. Information from authoritative sources however, such as the EPA, the CDC and the DPH, often go unnoticed.

KNOWN HEALTH RISKS

First, it should be understood that the CDC does not differentiate between common household mold and toxigenic mold. According to the CDC, “there is always a little mold everywhere - in the air and on many surfaces. There are very few reports that toxigenic molds found inside homes can cause unique or rare health conditions such as pulmonary hemorrhage or memory loss. These case reports are rare, and a causal link between the presence of the toxigenic mold and these conditions has not been proven.”

Exposure to household mold does not always present health problems. Mold effects different people differently. IF a person is effected by mold, he or she usually manifests only hay-fever type symptoms that are typically reversible if the mold is removed. Some people will likely be more sensitive to mold and can have a more severe reaction if they already have some type of chronic respiratory disease such as asthma. The concern of these people should be greater.

Which ever category you may be in, there are common sense approaches to dealing with mold.

If you would like more detailed information from the CDC and the CT DPH, the source material sited in this news letter is available online. Log onto our web site and click on the newsletter link bar. The online version of this newsletter contains PDF files you can download. If the Mold Newsletter is not the current newsletter, click on the Newsletter Archive button.

MOLD TESTING IS OFTEN COSTLY AND UNNECESSARY according to the Connecticut Department of Health (DPH). Why does the Connecticut DPH and the CDC downplay the need for mold testing or sampling? Some mold testing companies will tell you that the purpose for mold testing is to determine the type of mold and the level of mold in the home. Their purpose for mold testing sounds reasonable until you understand why the above mentioned health organizations do not recommend routine sampling of mold. According to the CDC, there is no difference in treatment for mold, whether the mold is considered a toxigenic mold or a common household mold. The CDC also makes clear that there are no established standards that determine what is and what is not an acceptable level of mold in a home. Without a difference in what type of mold is in a home and with no standards for acceptable levels, the value of testing is often insignificant.

HOW TO DEAL WITH MOLD IN THE HOME

The common sense approach to dealing with mold does not typically require mold testing or sampling. Health organizations place their focus on two things:

- Correction of the moisture problem providing the proper environment for mold growth.
- Removal of the mold.

Almost everything in a home is potential food for mold, so you cannot remove the food source to prevent mold growth. However, mold cannot grow without adequate moisture. Normal moisture levels in a home are typically insufficient for mold growth. The presence of mold usually indicates that there is a moisture problem somewhere in the home, such as a plumbing leak, a roof leak, lack of ventilation, or seepage into the basement, etc. The first course of action in such cases is to eliminate the moisture problem. Sometimes the moisture problem can be corrected by a handy homeowner and sometimes professional repairs are required.

Once the moisture problem has been corrected, the mold should be removed. According to the CDC, mold can often be removed with a little water and bleach or with other common household cleaners. If typical household dirt, grime or food stains can be cleaned from a surface without damaging it, minor mold growth on that surface should also be able to be cleaned by most homeowners.

There are, however, surfaces in the home from which mold can not be easily removed. Certain types of ceiling panels, texture tiles made of paper products, and carpet will likely be damaged by water, bleach, or household cleaners used to remove mold. Those types of surfaces require replacement to remove mold.

SOMETIMES PROFESSIONAL HELP FOR MOLD REMOVAL IS WARRANTED.

Wide spread significant mold growth may be too much work to remove personally. A wall surface or ceiling that is covered in thick mold from one end to the other will likely have to be replaced with professional help. Also, people at special risk from mold due to an existing respiratory disease should not remove mold. They may ask the assistance of a friend or have the removal done professionally

MOLD AND THE HOME INSPECTION

The state regulations that govern home inspections in Connecticut do not require an inspector to inspect for mold. A smart home inspector will keep a lookout for evidence of possible mold or mildew as an indication of a moisture problem. Most moisture problems in readily accessible areas of a home will usually be related to a system or component in the home that falls within the scope of the inspection. The inspector will likely report the possible presence of mold as an evidence of the moisture problem and recommend corrective action and further evaluation. Correcting the moisture problem will remove the cause of the mold.

Each home owner will decide how to address mold removal. That decision should be based on the homeowner's current health condition, which may or may not place him or her at special risk with mold. We hope the information provided in this newsletter will help your clients in making this decision. We recommend you read fully the documents used as the source for this newsletter. The CDC's document can be found at the following web address : <http://www.cdc.gov/mold/stachy.htm>.

The CT DPH news releases can be found at:

[http://www.ct.gov/dcp/lib/dcp/press_releases/mold_\(final\)_august_2006.doc](http://www.ct.gov/dcp/lib/dcp/press_releases/mold_(final)_august_2006.doc)

http://www.dph.state.ct.us/Agency_News/Press_Releases/PR_60404_Mold.pdf