

Allergy & Asthma Center

of Southern Oregon, PC

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Mold Avoidance

Indoor molds: These molds and mildews grow normally in soils and decaying plant materials and can occur on damp window sills, heating ducts, house plant soils, rugs and pads which had been wet previously, walls and surfaces which are damp from outside or inside moisture, floors of bathrooms and any other damp or humid rooms – or in basements and crawl spaces under homes.

Outdoor Molds: These microscopic fungi grow on fallen leaves, freshly cut grass, damp shady areas and in soil everywhere. They can also thrive in rotting wood and standing water. They occur year round, but are most likely to trigger symptoms during rainy months of the year (October through May). Rain triggers surface molds on soils or plants to release numerous tiny spores into the air which also blow into homes as dusts.

How Molds cause Allergies and Asthma: Mold spores (like seeds) blow in the air and are then breathed in through the nose and mouth or land on the eyes. These spores may trigger all the same seasonal “seasonal hayfever” symptoms that are typically associated with pollen allergies. They also can trigger chest tightness, wheezing & sudden bouts of asthma.

Mold spores become problematic as the wind blows them about, and they are particularly numerous after a rainy spell. People often have trouble after rain storms, working in fields or gardens or turning the soil. Molds are especially problematic indoors. Old mattresses and pillows, older furniture or objects from storage, old books, heat ducts etc. all can build up dusts containing mold spores. Once mold begins to grow on wood, insulation, or plaster in floors or walls it is difficult to eliminate entirely and can cause difficult, at times, sudden onset-severe or allergies and asthma.

Self Help Measures: (indoor molds)

- ▶ Avoid dusts in bedding and home. **Mold spores are first and foremost a dust.** (See Environmental Dust Avoidance handout)
- ▶ Identify the source with eyes: Look for greyish or dark “mildew” areas on surfaces
- ▶ Identify the source with your nose: If there is a ‘musty’ smell, look for the source.
- ▶ Wash down any moldy surfaces frequently with a solution of 1 part bleach and 9 parts water.
- ▶ You may also use a product called X-14 or other mold cleaners which are similar.

Self Help Measures: (outdoor molds)

- ▶ Stay indoors when the wind is blowing and the humidity high.
- ▶ Avoid disturbing areas outdoors where molds can accumulate. (Piles of leaves, standing water, damp musty areas).
- ▶ Keep windows in the home shut generally and use air conditioning to keep the air in the house free from outdoor pollens and molds.
- ▶ Keep auto windows up to minimize mold and pollen blowing into eyes and nose.
- ▶ If you have been working outdoors, shower and wash before going to sleep.
- ▶ Avoid hanging clothes and sheets outside to dry during pollen season as pollens and mold spores will settle on the material.
- ▶ Have a non allergic family member or gardener mow the lawn and rake the leaves.

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