

MEDfacts

An Educational Health Series From National Jewish Health®



ALLERGIES TO MOLD

Facts About Allergies

The tendency to develop allergies may be inherited. If you have allergic tendencies and are exposed to certain things in your environment (allergens), you may develop allergies to some of those things. Examples of allergy symptoms include itchy eyes, runny nose, asthma symptoms, eczema and rash. The timing of the allergic response may be immediate or delayed. Allergy testing may be recommended to help identify your allergies.

Allergies to Mold

Many types of molds live in our environment. Mold grows in indoor and outdoor areas that are warm, dark and/or moist. Molds reproduce and grow by sending tiny spores into the air. Inhaled spores cause allergy and asthma symptoms.

Environmental Control

Once an allergy has been identified, the next step is to decrease or eliminate exposure to the allergen. This is called environmental control. Evidence shows that allergy and asthma symptoms may improve over time if the recommended environmental control changes are made. Many of the changes are for the entire home. The bedroom is the most important, because the bedroom is where people usually spend 1/3 to 1/2 of their time.

Steps to Control Mold Allergens

- In the bathroom - use an exhaust fan or open a window to remove moisture after showering. Wipe down the damp surfaces after showering. Wash bathrooms with a mold-preventing or mold-killing solution at least once a month.
- In the kitchen - use an exhaust fan to remove water vapor when cooking. Discard spoiled foods immediately. Empty the garbage daily. Empty water pans below self-defrosting refrigerators frequently.
- Remove moldy stored items.

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- Vent the clothes dryer outside.
- Remove leaves, clippings and compost from around your house.
- The person with a mold allergy should avoid cutting grass and raking leaves or wear a face mask for these activities.

Other Helpful Suggestions

- Keep the indoor moisture low. The ideal humidity level is 30-40%. Use an air conditioner or dehumidifier in warm climates to decrease the humidity. Clean the dehumidifier regularly.
- Humidifiers and vaporizers are not recommended because they will increase humidity in the room and create a favorable environment for mold growth. If you must use a humidifier, clean it daily to prevent mold growth. Keep the humidity below 40%.

Your health care provider may recommend additional medications, therapies or other environmental controls. Exposure to mold can make allergy and/or asthma symptoms worse in some people. To avoid these problems follow the above steps to decrease or eliminate exposure.

Note: This information is provided to you as an educational service of National Jewish. It is not meant to be a substitute for consulting with your own physician.

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