

Mold and Your Health

~ courtesy info from the Dumpster Diva at

Been There Dump That

One tends to think of something that grows as having life and being categorized as either a plant or animal. Mold, however, is neither plant nor animal, yet it can grow, have a life of its own and *negatively impact your health*. It belongs in the fungi kingdom, and unlike a plant, mold does not get energy from the sun via photosynthesis. The sun, in fact, inhibits the growth of mold, which sort of eats its way along, most commonly fulfilling its mission to break up decaying organic stuff like dead plants or animals.

Mildew is a form of mold, and the most common place in the house to find mildew is shower stalls and basements -- warm, humid, wet or damp, dark environments. Surprisingly, neither the Environmental Protection Agency nor other government entity has issued standards on mold or mold spore levels, so there are no building regulations.

Mildew often forms a thin, white, gray or greenish layer while the less frequent "black mold" has a green-black hue and grows on surfaces with a high cellulose content like paper, wood, fiberboard and gypsum board, all common building materials. While mold can do some serious damage to your home's structural elements, interior walls, floors, ceiling and upholstered furniture, it can really raise havoc with your own health and well-being and that of your family.

Mostly common is an allergic reaction to the presence of mold, which may or may not be linked to mold:

- running nose and sneezing
- coughing or wheezing
- redness or itchy eyes
- rash or skin irritation
- asthma attacks
- fever (less common)
- breathing difficulty (less common)

The most vulnerable people to mold health risks include infants, children, elderly people with respiratory or lung conditions and those with weakened immune systems from ongoing treatments.

There are some routine maintenance and awareness issues which can reduce the incidence of mold in your house:

- check plumbing for leaks a few times a year
- use A/C or a dehumidifier in summer, the most humid season
- maintain good ventilation at all times
- try to keep indoor humidity between 30 and 50 percent max

- refrain from installing carpets in basements and bathrooms
- have and use an exhaust fan in every bathroom