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Bacon's

# 3831 Fighting mold and mildew P4B

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Over the years I have received hundreds of e-mails and letters concerning mold and mildew problems in the home.

Mold is a fungus with more than 100,000 known species that can be found in almost every environment on the planet. In order to thrive, molds require a food source, a water source and the right temperature.

Molds can be found on cellulose materials such as drywall, insulation and paper products, on clothing, leather, finished and unfinished wood products, food, plants, etc.

According to a recent publication from METS Laboratories, "Molds can be found throughout the house, but are commonly found where there is moisture, such as in the bathroom. Mold growth can often be seen in the form of discoloration and can be many colors: white, orange, pink, blue, green, black or brown. When molds are present in large quantities (called colonies), they become a health concern."

For years the thought was to simply remove the visible mold spores using bleach and water. Although bleaching kills the surface of the mold, it does not kill the body of the mold. Mold spores have been known to linger, dormant, for as long as 15 years, then spring back to life when moisture is again introduced into its environment.

Some molds can be removed from hard surfaces such as ceramic tile and marble by using a dishwashing liquid followed by a solution of bleach and warm water. For the

toxic and pathogenic molds, more drastic solutions may be needed. In some instances, it has been necessary to remove the wall boarding, floor covering and all personal belongings from the home.

Whatever is removed from a contaminated building should stay outside.

Mold spores carried on your clothing and other personal belongings can even follow you from house to house.

When dealing with it, first make sure you stop the water leak to the basement or through the roof. Add a dehumidifier to damp rooms, turn the heat up in the winter and open doors to rooms no longer used. These things will lower the moisture in the air that feeds molds.

You likely will need to insulate the attic and walls, vent all appliances with a vent to the exterior, use bath and kitchen fans and clean the fish tank and drain pan under the refrigerator. Watch for mold spores, too, on houseplants and in potting soils.

Heating and cooling ducts should be cleaned, sealed and insulated and checked annually for leaks.

What do you need to do if you see mold or suspect that your home has a mold problem? Have the home tested by a reputable company. As far as I know, there is no licensing of testing companies or laboratories. So be careful, and check local testing laboratories for a referral or contact a home inspector, preferably one who is a member of the American Society of Home Inspectors.

You can test the home yourself by ordering a testing kit from one of the many sites that have sprung up on the Internet.