

Check Your House for Mold

The Jamestown area, as well as many other parts of the state, is going through an unusually wet period. This weather can lead to a higher level of moisture in our basements. Higher moisture levels can mean a greater chance of mold. If you see mold, or smell its musty odor, in your basement, it is important to thoroughly clean the affected area, because mold that is left to grow can cause health problems. Mold exposure may result in respiratory problems, nasal congestion, watery eyes, sore throat, coughing, and skin irritation. Mold may also trigger asthma attacks for those with that disease. If there is a high level of mold in your home, exposure may lead to the development of an allergy to the mold.

While everyone should avoid exposure, there are certain groups of people that should take extra care to avoid breathing in mold spores. These groups of people include children, the elderly, pregnant women, and people who already have respiratory sensitivities. These people may show more adverse health symptoms from mold exposure than others.

If you are unsure of whether there is mold growing in your home, there are specific places to look where mold growth is common. Mold grows on moist materials, so the best places to look for it are places where you have had leaking, flooding, condensation, or humidity levels above 70 percent. Also, if you have moisture seeping through concrete walls and floors in the basement, this leads to mold growth in that area. The best places to check are under cabinets, behind baseboards, inside walls, in carpet padding and under vinyl wall coverings.

Mold must be removed so it does not continue to be a problem. Before attempting to remove mold, it is best to put on the proper protection such as eye protection, rubber gloves, and a mask to keep from breathing in the spores. First, dampen the moldy area to reduce the amount of spores that become airborne during cleaning. If removing mold from a hard surface such as plastic or metal, scrub with a soap or detergent that does not contain ammonia. Then, disinfect the area by using a bleach and water solution. Rinse with water and quickly dry the area. With porous surfaces such as drywall or carpet padding, mold cannot completely be removed so the affected material needs to be thrown away and replaced.

For more information on this topic, please contact Christina Rittenbach, Extension agent at the Stutsman County Extension office. She can be reached at 252-9030 or christina.rittenbach@ndsu.edu