Environmental Asthma Triggers: Mold and Moisture

Asthma symptoms like coughing and wheezing can be triggered by mold caused by indoor moisture. Some of these triggers can increase a person’s chance of developing asthma.

Addressing multiple triggers at the same time is the best way to improve asthma.

These things can cause mold to grow.

- **Clogged Gutters**
  - Gutters filled with leaves and debris prevent rainwater from draining away from the home.

- **Leaks**
  - Leaking pipes create moisture that can lead to mold.
  - It takes 24-48 hours for mold to grow on most surfaces.

- **Window Condensation**
  - Water droplets (or condensation) on the inside of windows can mean that indoor humidity is too high.

- **High Humidity**
  - Indoor humidity greater than 50% is too high.
  - When indoor humidity is too high, a home can smell damp and musty.

Here are steps you can take to prevent or remove mold and improve lung health.

- **Prevent Moisture**
  - Fix leaks and clean gutters.
  - If there is mold, clean it with soap and water.
  - Run HVAC and kitchen/bathroom exhaust fans.
  - Use a dehumidifier to remove moisture. Keep indoor humidity levels in the 30-50% range.

- **Clean Mold**
  - Remove damp materials like drywall, cardboard, carpet, and furniture, as soon as possible to avoid mold development.
  - Bleach can be used in addition to soap and water for stubborn mold. If you choose to use bleach, wear protective gear on hands and face and use 1 part bleach to 30 parts water (or 1/3 cup bleach in 1 gallon water).
  - Consult disaster clean up resources for big jobs, such as flooding.

RESOURCES

- https://sph.unc.edu/cehs
- http://nchealthyhomes.com/
- https://ie.unc.edu/cpes/disaster-response-recovery/

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