

Molds – Enigma of Indoor Pollution

by Simon Yu, MD

If you are suffering from headaches, allergies, asthma, fatigue, fibromyalgia, poor memory, persistent cough, muscle weakness, or hypertension, and your doctor said everything is fine according to the lab tests, think of environmentally induced illness, especially indoor pollution. Indoor pollution arising within one's home, not outdoor pollution, may be the real reason for chronic illness in susceptible individuals.

Some major sources of indoor contaminants include odors and fumes arising from leaking utility gas or oil pipes for heating furnaces, paint odors, household cleansers and disinfectants, new carpets, bedding and upholstery, and insecticides, pesticides, and fungicides used inside and outside of the home.

Consider the following example of environmentally induced illness. Here are the circumstances: Your house has a history of a leaky roof or basement. You develop shortness of breath, persistent cough or vague chest pain. Your doctor diagnosed you with asthma. You are not responding to asthma medication. You wonder what could be the cause of your symptoms. Consider an allergic reaction to molds. Allergic Broncho-pulmonary aspergillosis, mold-induced allergic reaction, can essentially mimic asthma. If this is the case with your condition, it may respond to antifungal drug therapy whereas it did not respond to standard asthma medication.

Stachybotry fungus, black mold you see in your bathroom, in a leaky basement or behind the leaky wallpaper, can produce a mycotoxin called Trichothecenes. This is a neurotoxin and, in a susceptible individual, it will create a multitude of symptoms. At some point, you will be saying, "My doctor said everything is fine. Then, why do I feel so lousy?" and going thru a living hell because of the conditions within your own home.

Is there any hope for environmental illness induced by indoor pollution? First, you have to recognize that the multitude of unexplainable symptoms from which you are suffering might be related to indoor pollution.

Second, you may need professional people to help you identify the problems in your home and fix the source of the problems. If you smell the odor of gas, call the gas company. If you smell moldy odors in your bathroom, you may need to inspect the wall behind the wallpaper. If black or green mold is present, you can hire a professional to clean it up. If you decide to clean it by yourself, use a professional grade gas mask to protect your breathing while using diluted Clorox or a comparable product.

Third, you need proper medical care for your unique exposure to indoor pollution. If you have been exposed to molds and mycotoxins, you may need a trial of anti-fungal remedies.

The signs and symptoms of indoor pollution are a big enigma for patients and doctors. If the source of the problem can be identified and corrected, the rewards can be dramatic and enduring.

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