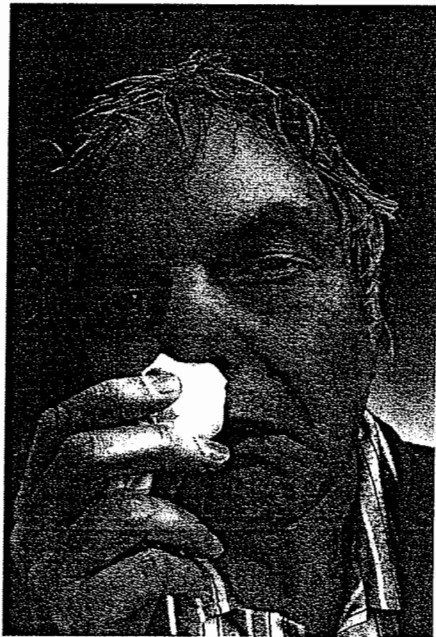


Uncovering the mystery of **MOLD**

by Michelle Breeze

Mold. It's in our wine,
cheese, medicine, trees
and, unfortunately, sometimes our homes.

Mold grows wherever moisture is present. It's
a natural biological process that occurs when



little microscopic
spores land on a
damp spot and
begin to grow.

There are over

100,000 types of

mold – and there

are some that

cause allergies,

upper respiratory

problems, rashes and occasionally much more

serious illness. But mold is largely controllable

with common sense and a few easy steps.

Tommy Donovan, owner of RIC Inspections, sees mold everyday while inspecting houses in and around Greenville. "In my business, I see mold almost daily," he says. "But only a handful of the molds I encounter are actually dangerous to humans. And I don't see those very often."

He continued. "The fact is, mold is a natural biological growth. And I have never been in a house that didn't have some degree of growth. What do you think the stuff is in the shower? We call it mildew - but mildew is mold. It's

small, confined spaces. But bleach is really the best answer for a small sampling of mold."

With 100,000 types of mold, how do you know that what you have is common? Well, there are three very common molds that are present in most homes; cladosporium, aspergillus and penicillium, the sister of penicillin.

These three molds are not usually accompanied by serious illness, although those with allergy sensitivities sometimes display allergic symptoms.

But mold issues are relatively easy to resolve. "With common mold, we spray down the walls with bleach, then apply an EPA regulated fungicide," says McGriff. "We wear protective clothing, but don't take the same precautions we would if it were something toxic, like stachybotrys."

"One of the most harmful types of mold is a species called stachybotrys," says Donovan. "It's usually the most harmful mold that people find in houses and include symptoms like diarrhea, fatigue, depression, and respiratory infection."

He continued, "If I find a house that has stachybotrys, I advise people to call a mold abatement professional and have it immediately eradicated. Plus, if there are people living in the house or moving into the house who are pregnant or have compromised immune systems, I don't recommend a move in until the house is completely clean. It's not safe."

Stachybotrys, also known as Black Mold or Toxic Mold is black like smut, wet, sticky and because of its viscous nature, not very likely to be airborne. Its greatest danger lies in its propensity to cause serious respiratory distress, gastrointestinal irregularity and internal organ failure.

So what do you do if you suspect Black Mold? "It's rare that people have Black Mold," says McGriff. "Maybe 1 in 25 cases actually turn out to be toxic. That's not very many. If I suspect harmful mold, I will run a mold sampling to determine exactly the type of mold we're dealing with."

"But," he continues. "If it does turn

out to be stachybotrys, depending on the situation and the amount of infestation, we will take several steps immediately to eradicate the problem."

Green Earth first insures their men are clothed properly in coveralls, respirators, and gloves before beginning any mold abatement job. Then, armed with a HEPA filter vacuum and an EPA registered fungicide and anti-microbial agent, they set up a containment area, including polyethylene curtains and scrubbers, and get to work.

Any amount of growth that is taken from the infected area is considered biohazardous and so Green Earth disposes of it as such. The special filters they use on the ways suck up the dirty air and push back out clean air. The job can take anywhere from days to weeks and if the problem is severe enough sometimes involves tearing down walls.

"It's rare that we've had to go into the walls, but if there is a ton of moisture present, you can guarantee there's some spillover into the dry wall," said McGriff. "If this is the case, sometimes you have to remove the dry wall, clean behind the walls, and rebuild. It can be a very long, expensive and involved process."

So how do we keep mold from becoming a problem? "Remove the source of moisture," says Donovan. "Mold can't grow if it doesn't have moisture to grow from. If your roof leaks, fix it. If your bathroom overflows, plug it. Do what it takes to not allow mold to grow and your problem will often solve itself."

"There's a great deal of concern right now about mold growth," Donovan mused. "Much of it is hysteria. Mold and mold abatement is not regulated or monitored by the government and people tend to become overexcited when they see a little mold. The level of mold that it takes to be considered harmful or toxic has yet to be determined, and mold can be a sensitive subject because some people are sensitive to it. Mold could be the next lead paint or asbestos crisis. But unlike some others, a mold problem can be easily resolved." GM



Mold growing around vents and along foundations.

a very common problem, with a very common cure."

So what's the cure? Common household bleach. "One part bleach to ten parts water," says mold remediation specialist and owner of GreenEarth Inc, Larry McGriff.

"If you find a little mildew in your house, be it your bathroom, laundry room or kitchen, use a little bleach and water and that should take care of the problem," says McGriff. "However, I do recommend using a respirator and protective clothing, particularly in