

MAY 15, 2002 - Preventing Mold In Your Homes

Speaker: [Mr. Willie Adams](#), tel. 713-782-4411, with [Envirotest](#)

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

Mr. Adams gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Preventing Mold in Your Homes." Willie defined exactly what mold (also called, "Fungi") is, what it looks like and the symptoms it causes.

According to Mr. Adams, some of the health symptoms caused by mold are asthma, weight loss, pneumonia, blindness, lack of energy, liver cancer, and kidney cancer. Since mold cannot grow in the body, symptoms usually disappear within a couple of weeks if the victim is removed from the mold-infected home. Willie wears a mask and respirator when he inspects infected homes. Even then he has gotten sick because 80 percent of the spores are absorbed through the skin.

Mr. Adams believes you can prevent mold if you understand what causes it. He said that three things are required for mold to grow: water, viable spores and food. The spores are everywhere and the food is paper, wood etc. The only controllable substance therefore is water, so special attention should be paid to preventing moisture infiltration in order to prevent mold in the home.

Mr. Adams listed five (in order, one being the worst) main problems he finds in the area, which help to propagate mold in homes:

1. Artificial Stucco (EIFS)
2. Bad drainage between exterior walls and outside cladding
3. HVAC duct leaks in the attic
4. Plumbing or roof leaks
5. Vinyl wallpaper installed on the inside of exterior walls. (causes condensation just under the wallpaper because vinyl is non-permeable)

Other interesting points made by Mr. Adams:

- a) You cannot eradicate mold in place once it has grown. You have to remove the infected area. Spores measure 1 to 10 microns and count about million per square inch. You cannot get them all.
- b) Mold spores go airborne and are inhaled or absorbed by occupants. To capture airborne spores, buy pleated AC filters (costs about \$8-\$15) which filter out 1 to 2 microns. The cheap ones we usually buy only filter down to about 50 microns.
- c) It is important to keep relative humidity under 60% to prevent mold.
- d) Always install vapor barriers (e.g., felt paper) on the warm side of the wall.
- e) Mold damage always worsens with time.
- f) A home with heavy mold growing will smell of alcohol

For further reading, he recommends literature and seminars by Joseph Lstiburek, Ph.D, P.E. See Dr. Lstiburek's website <http://www.buildingscience.com/> for useful information on mold and other aspects of residential construction.

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