

# Mold woes? Manage moisture through better ventilation

(BPT) - Few phrases can strike fear into a homeowner's heart as powerfully as the words "you have a mold problem." Mold troubles in your home can cause health troubles for your family, and both issues can be notoriously difficult to resolve. It occurs everywhere in nature, but when mold begins growing indoors, it can damage any surface it grows on and cause respiratory problems for those living in the affected house.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say that mold can cause reactions that range from mild (stuffy nose, itchy eyes or skin irritation) to severe (fever, shortness of breath and chronic lung ailments). In extreme cases, the mold can even infect a person's lungs. Studies have also suggested a link between mold exposure and the development of asthma in young children, the CDC notes.

## Mold and moisture

So what causes mold to take root in your home? In a word: moisture.

Mold spores are everywhere, and when they land on a wet or damp surface they can begin to grow. That means mold tends to grow in areas of your home that are more humid, such as in the bathroom, a below-grade room, the kitchen or garage. Mold can also grow in hidden places, such as between walls where a water leak has occurred and gone undetected for some time.

"The key to mold control is moisture control," the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency says on its website. The EPA says you should clean up mold right away and eliminate the source of moisture that allowed the mold to grow.

## Managing moisture

Managing excess mois-

ture in your home can help prevent the growth of mold. In addition to monitoring your home regularly to catch plumbing or roof leaks quickly, improving ventilation can help control moisture and improve overall indoor air quality.

"Places that are often or always damp can be hard to maintain completely free of mold," the EPA notes. "If there's some mold in the shower or elsewhere in the bathroom that seems to reappear, increasing ventilation (running a fan or opening a window) and cleaning more frequently will usually prevent mold from recurring, or at least keep the mold to a minimum."

For more effective, economical passive ventilation, a fresh-air skylight can help reduce humidity and stale air. When open, Energy Star-qualified, no leak solar-powered fresh-air skylights, like those made by Velux America, can allow excess moisture and unhealthy fumes to escape your home. When closed, the bright sunlight that skylights admit into your home can help dry out damp areas. Skylights are a great option in damp rooms, such as bathrooms, where privacy concerns mean an open window is impractical, or in rooms where adding a window or venting fan may not be plausible, such as a garage. Add remote controlled solar powered blinds to solar powered fresh air skylights to your home and the products, as well as installation costs, are eligible for a 30 percent federal tax credit.

## Removing mold

If you discover mold in your home, it's important to remove it quickly - even if it just seems like a harmless amount growing in a corner of the shower. Mold can

spread quickly. You can probably handle a minor problem yourself, using commercially available cleansers to remove the mold from affected surfaces. More severe infestations that affect drywall, wood or other parts of the home's structure, will likely need to be handled by a professional.

If mold has damaged parts of your home, remove and replace those parts. Monitor humidity levels in your home and make sure all rooms - especially those where a problem has occurred - have adequate ventilation. The CDC recommends homeowners take steps to prevent future mold growth, such as using an air conditioner and dehumidifier during humid months, and adding mold inhibitors to paint before repainting rooms.



Mold will never be anyone's idea of a welcome house guest, but with pre-

ventive steps such as improving ventilation to control moisture, you can ensure you never again have to fear those three little words: "you have mold."

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