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/

Produced by The Community Engagement Core of the UNC-Chapel Hill Center for Environmental Health and Susceptibility with a grant from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (P30ES010126), updated 9/2020