

May - National Allergy Month

Is the 'dust' in Your Home Toxic?

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Has it ever occurred to you that the dust that accumulates in our homes could actually be toxic to your family and pets? It is a veritable reservoir for allergies and disease. House dust can actually become the nesting ground and food source for dust mites, cockroaches, bacteria and mold.

There are seven components that make up Indoor Air Quality (IAQ). Particles, Odors, Gases, Bio-contaminants, (these are the BIG 4 or "Toxic Soup"), Relative Humidity, Temperature and Comfort (air movement). In looking at just the first component - *Particles* - we often find the following in the "settled out dust" in our homes – skin cells, pet dander, mold spores, pollen, dust mites, insect parts, insect droppings, fiber fragments, cellulose and yeast. Enough to make you want to keep the dust OUT of your house and your breathing spaces!

Having assisted scores of people discover what is in their indoor air and further assisting them by creating healthier indoor spaces, I know how important it is to be properly educated in this area. So, let's talk about just one of the "things" that hitchhike on "dust" in our homes – MOLD. Mold spores do not travel on their own, they can catch a ride on us, our pets, in our air conditioning systems and settle out in the dust... waiting for the right amount of moisture so they can colonize and grow. Mold may be causative agent which precipitates people suffering from Building Related Illnesses and a major player in Sick Building Syndrome.

Take a look at the following symptoms that people have experienced when residing or working in a 'sick building'. This list has been compiled by the Center for Disease Control and the World Health Organization. Sufferers experience the symptoms while in the particular indoor environment, and the symptoms are lessened or go away completely when out of the environment. The most common symptoms include one or more of the following items –

Chronic nasal congestion, itchy skin, breathing difficulties, coughs, nosebleeds, chronic sinus infections, chronic ear infections, poor concentration, sore throats, low energy levels, muscle aches, sleep disorders, ADD, skin rashes, headaches, itchy eyes, fatigue and watery eyes.

You often hear that mold is everywhere, which gives people the impression that it is okay to have mold and you can't prevent it – however there is nothing further from the truth. The good news is that mold can be controlled or eliminated from your indoor environment. D. Douglas Hoffman, author of Mold Free Construction, has compiled a list of 36 steps one can follow in a *Sanitization Protocol* that will reduce the possibility of mold growth in an indoor environment. You may request your free copy of the *Sanitization Protocol*, by emailing della@normi.org. To participate in NORMI's National IAQ Online Survey concerning your indoor air quality visit www.IAQScreening.com/01125.

Della White is a Certified Environmental Educator, and has performed hundreds of indoor investigations and solved indoor air quality mysteries. She is a National Trainer for NORMI™, the National Organization of Remediators and Mold Inspectors and is their National Director of Education. She takes educating the public very seriously about various aspects of indoor air quality. Della is available for community service awareness programs and consultations concerning your indoor air. She may be reached at della@normi.org or (239)731-0102.