



Mould Allergy Patient Advice Sheet

Moulds and fungi

These are organisms prevalent both outdoors in plants and gardens but also in foodstores and within the home. They begin life as microscopic spores which settle, germinate and produce filamentous mycelia. Fungi produce a definite fruiting body at intervals along the mycelium which produces more spores. Moulds have only microscopic bumps or nodules representing the seed producing body. The spores are released into the air and carried by the wind to a further growth site. In the common mushroom fungus the edible part is the fruiting body and the mycelia are beneath the ground.

Moulds in the home

Moulds are fairly ubiquitous but the most important site for allergy is the home. Moulds require moisture to grow. In a structurally sound house condensation around the windows is important. In houses of poor repair, leaks from plumbing, rising damp and faulty or non-existent damp courses, damp patches on walls due to the cavity wall becoming “bridged”, porous plaster or faulty water drainage from roofs or leaking roofs.

Control of Moulds

In the home the first step is to control condensation:

- Keep an adequate level of dry heating. Calor gas and paraffin heaters create moisture
- Keep kitchen and bathroom doors closed when cooking, washing or bathing to reduce spread of vapour throughout the house
- Do not allow kettles and pans to boil for longer than necessary
- Do not dry clothes on radiators without adequate ventilation
- Tumble driers should be ventilated outside
- Consider fitting extractor fans in the steamiest areas if the above do not seem enough
- Do not overfill cupboards and wardrobes (especially built-in ones) so that there is air circulation. Ventilators are a good idea as is leaving a space at the back of the shelf.

- Cavity wall insulation may help. Allergic people should avoid urea-formaldehyde foam as the smell may be a problem. Before the system is fitted arrange for the firm to leave an open box of the material in your home for a month to see if the smell irritates you. The best recommendation is a “dry fill” system, blown in mineral wool or expanded polystyrene beads.

After controlling the source, existing mould may be killed using ordinary household bleach (sodium hypochlorite), diluted in plain water, one part of bleach to four of water to which should be added one part in 100 of Benzalkonium Chloride, available as Benzalkonium Chloride BP or Gloquat C from chemists or manufacturers. Wipe after use with plain water, and repeat the bleach wash. Allow to dry for a week, and repeat if there is any recurrence of mould growth.

If this is not enough, you may be able to obtain other fungicides, but seek professional advice first, from a surveyor or a reliable builder.

Classical desensitisation (or more correctly hyposensitisation) arranged through the allergy clinic may be of help, but a number of moulds give rise to peculiar allergies that are not suitable for this type of treatment and moulds may affect children who are too young to be able to have this kind of treatment. In any case hyposensitizing will not work if there is a severe mould problem in your home which is not remedied.