

## Scientific Study

**Mold Linked to Allergies**

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A new scientific study confirms that mold odor near baseboards is correlated with childhood allergies and rhinitis. “There are consistent findings on associations between asthma and allergy symptoms and residential mold and moisture,” says Hägerhed-Engman and colleagues.

Molds can have devastating health effects, particularly on young, developing children. Odor along baseboards may signify hidden moisture or mold problems within the walls or foundation of a building.

Mold and dampness is linked to many health problems, including respiratory disease, asthma, allergies, immune disease, behavioral disorders, and toxic poisoning. Occupying a moldy building nearly doubles the chance of asthma.

Molds are both a biotoxin and an allergen. Allergic symptoms of mold exposure include congestion, sneezing, watery eyes, sore throat, cough, skin irritation, headache, fatigue, and light sensitivity. Toxic mold exposure symptoms include neurological disorders, behavioral changes, chronic fatigue, and chemical sensitivity.

There are many different kinds of bacteria, fungi, and spores which grow on nearly any surface under the right conditions. Moist places, such as air ducts, ceilings, and plumbing enclosures are most problematic. Homeowners frequently neglect regular cleaning of these out-of-reach places and mold can develop and fester quite

readily. Energy efficient hermetically sealed homes do not allow moisture to escape through adequate ventilation.

Researchers say the only true way to determine if baseboard odor is linked to hidden mold problems is to take apart the baseboard and break into the wall and floor to look for visible moisture damage.

Inadequate ventilation increases the risk of both mold discovery and the health effects of any existing mold.

Keeping a home dry and well ventilated decreases the chance of mold. A dehumidifier may be useful in humid climates and damp places such as laundry rooms and bathrooms. Checking regularly for leaks and replacing any water damaged building materials promptly will reduce the chances of mold taking hold.

Should mold illness occur, prompt medical attention should be sought. It is crucial to relocate until mold remediation has been completed. Continued exposure to mold can cause worsening health over time.

**Reference**

Hägerhed-Engman L, Sigsgaard T, Samuelson I, Sundell J, Janson S, Bornehag CG. Low home ventilation rate in combination with moldy odor from the building structure increase the risk for allergic symptoms in children. *Indoor Air*. 2009 Jun;19(3):184-92. Epub 2009 Mar 9.