

*Scientific Study*

# *Dampness Linked to Allergies*

Researchers have confirmed that dampness in students' dormitories leads to allergy and airway infection, a finding that also applies to home and office environments.

An extremely strong correlation was found between building condensation and dry cough, an unproductive cough in terms of the lack of expectoration. Other symptoms related to moisture in the air were wheezing, rhinitis, eczema, ear inflammation, pneumonia, and tuberculosis. Even the risk of coming down with the common cold was significantly increased in damp dorm rooms.

Signs of indoor moisture to watch for include mold, dampness, water damage, condensation on windows during winter months, and discernable odors. Some molds are known to cause allergy, while others may induce toxicity.

A mold allergy produces hay fever like symptoms such as sneezing, runny nose, itching, nasal stuffiness, watering eyes, wheezing, and coughing. Allergy symptoms are generally regarded as different degrees of a nuisance. The symptoms are usually easily observable by a physician. Diagnosis can be confirmed with typical allergy tests for elevated immunoglobulin E (IgE).

The symptoms of mold toxicity are typically neurological and may include headache, extreme fatigue, dizziness, weakness, nausea, disorientation, memory problems, slowed reaction time, peripheral neuropathy, sensory neuropathy, and personality/mood changes. Other symptoms may include respiratory difficulty, rash, burning sensations in the nose and mouth, and gastrointestinal disorders. Serious toxicity may result in impaired speech, seizures, stroke, and paralysis.

Mold toxicity is not regarded as a nuisance, but rather a major life altering crisis. Victims of toxicity will take extreme measures to avoid further exposure to molds that add to their toxic load and induce cellular inflammation, nutritional deficiencies, malabsorption, and impaired liver detoxification. If mold toxicity is suspected, medical treatment should be sought immediately.

A dehumidifier may be helpful to reduce moisture. Water damage should be repaired immediately. Rooms with ongoing moisture, such as the bathroom, should have an exhaust fan or window fan blowing outward to remove excess moisture. Zeolite may be purchased in rock form to absorb odors from the air. Various moisture absorbing materials are available as well.

Regular building inspections can help to uncover and remediate mold problems. Rather than trying to clean them, the best way to remediate mold is to replace all affected materials.

**Reference**

Sun Y, Zhang Y, Sundell J, Fan Z, Bao L. Dampness at dorm and its associations with allergy and airways infection among college students in China: a cross-sectional study. *Indoor Air*. 2009 Apr;19(2):174-82. Epub 2009 Jan 28.

