

The Fungus Among Us- All About Mold Allergy

Mold allergy is a common problem, and it can affect many Americans. Allergy occurs when there is exposure to that particular mold spore in a person that is genetically predisposed to allergies. Once that patient sees that mold spore again, and they have developed an allergic response against that particular mold, and develop typical symptoms of nasal congestion, runny and itchy nose and eyes. The symptoms of mold allergy are essentially similar to that of hay fever to that of dust mite, and pollen allergies. Interestingly, mold spores can also reach the lungs and trigger asthma, and on rare occasions, it can also cause more serious allergic illness, such as allergic bronchopulmonary aspergillosis or allergic fungal sinusitis. What is mold, anyway? Mold is a fungal organism that helps with breaking down organic matter for decomposition, which if present in the home, it can be damaging to the household items and structures. Unfortunately, mold spores are everywhere and usually microscopic. Molds reproduce by forming spores, which can travel over large distances, and patients are usually allergic to these spores. There are many outdoor and indoor mold allergens that can cause symptoms. Outdoor mold allergens- can cause worse symptoms during the fall season or during seasonal changes, during damp weather or after rainfall. For indoor molds, just like dust mite allergies, they can persist all year round. Some patients can even have mold-induced asthma. To determine if mold is playing a role, a board-certified allergist will do skin testing for various extracts of molds. If a mold allergen is identified, it will be important to avoid mold exposure as much as possible, keeping the humidity level at less than 50%, using a dehumidifier to prevent future moisture from accumulating, and having a good ventilation system in place in areas such as the kitchen and the bathroom will be important. Also removing carpets, once it needs replacement will be important to more tile or vinyl flooring. If mold spore avoidance strategies don't help minimize the symptoms, medical therapy such as an antihistamine or nasal topical spray can be helpful. If the allergy medications OTC don't help, then your allergist can help with other prescribed medications to help with mold allergy symptoms. In addition, allergy shots can help desensitize and bring relief to mold allergic symptoms. For more tips and tricks about mold allergy- visit us at The Asthma and Allergy Clinic of Drs. Sweeney and Palacios-Kibler.