

Our Mold Story

by Dan & Carmella Dunkin

About 7 - 8 years ago I lost my job, suffered a back injury, and ended up filing a medical bankruptcy. Surviving on what we could earn running a paper route and our wits, we managed to find a farm house to live in. Little did we know that the previous owner of the house, (who died there), had not taken care of his property. The house had brick siding on the outside, and being built in the seventies, instead of using plaster as the older homes had used, they used the new building technique of using a paper lined drywall. Homes today are made more air tight for the purpose of energy conservation, but this method of building homes has created a new danger that was unforeseen, but the signs of it are now beginning to surface in the health of the inhabitants. We were one of the unfortunate group of people who developed "Sick Building Syndrome" (SBS), as a result of modern technology.

This is not a new experience, the downfall of the Roman Empire may have had its roots in their ingenious idea of creating a plumbing system that brought water into the cities through an aquaduct system made of clay piping, thus eliminating the need for people to carry water in using buckets. What they did not know was that the clay piping had lead in it, and they knew nothing of lead poisoning. Today, our homes and work places are built with materials that are full of cellulose because cellulose is hard to break down. Wood and paper are high in cellulose and outside of cows and termites, little has been known of what can decompose these items, except for one microscopic organism in nature called mold.

This great little farm house we were living in had been built 30 years prior to our moving in, and during that 30 year time span the mortar around the brick siding had cracked, chipped, and broken away through time. Termites got into the foundation wood and created a tunneling system that allows moisture to permeate the wood, not just on the surface, but from within as well. The exterior wood framing around some of the windows had weathered so bad that in some areas there were 3 inch long gaps large enough to stick a few fingers in. All of these gaps and openings created a place for windblown rain water to get inside the walls, to the wood framing and the paper lined drywall. Mold thrives in dark, damp, "SAFE" environments, and this is a perfect habitat for mold, with lots and lots of cellulose to consume.

One of the little known factors of mold is that when mold produces its offspring seeds, known as spores, to protect the spores mold creates a biotoxin, (commonly known as Mycotoxins and Endotoxins), which poisons any would be attackers like bacteria and other natural predators of mold. These Biotoxins can also be poisonous to other living organisms like humans.

We did not understand why we kept getting sick, our son never had asthma until we moved into this house, and we were all relatively healthy until then. We lived in that farm house growing our gourds for 5 years, and during that five years our bouts with illness kept increasing in frequency until one winter we all got sick and remained sick for 2 months straight. My son and I suffered a fever of 103, our daughter had an ear infection that would not go away and antibiotics had no effect, my wife lost her operatic singing voice, and overnight she developed pain in her legs, a pain that she could not pinpoint, but it made her bones hurt. She also started growing bumps that appeared to be growing on her bones, and the pain was excruciating. I did not understand her pain then, but remaining in that town over the next two years, now I too have begun developing these pains. Carmella and I both suffered extended periods of time where mentally we could not think clearly, and daily life was more like something of an

unexplainable dream. Then we learned about mold and discovered what was going on in our bedroom walls, which is the room we all camped out in because we were sick and being in that room kept us sick.

We sealed off that room, removed the carpeting from the house, sealed the brick siding, and did everything we could to try to separate us from the Biotoxin warfare factory that was growing in the house, but it was too late. Efforts to dry out the mold causes sporulation, and efforts to stop sporulation through humidity causes growth. We were victims of an uncontrolled invisible Biochemical warfare experiment laboratory festering in our home. We have since then learned that our building techniques not only create mold conditions, but mold conditions that favor those types of mold that produce toxic chemicals. Names like *Stachybotrys Chartarum*, *Aspergillus*, *Fusarium*, and even *Penicillium*, the one from which we derive penicillin.

Our next lesson we learned is that not only is mold illness becoming common but 99% of the doctors and medical community know nothing about them. Mold illnesses get diagnosed as Bronchitis, Asthma, Fibromyalgia, Arthritis, Cancer, and some even worse and more painful like Hypochondria and "There is nothing wrong with you". The problem with the medical community is not so much their lack of education and lack of knowledge of things they know, but their self-assurance that they already know all there is to know, and if they were not taught about molds in school, then molds must not be a problem. However, if you look at the history, the discovery of something new in medical science undergoes great scrutiny and is not accepted with open arms at the first mention of it. When bacteria and virus' were discovered it was met widely with disbelief and caution. Plain and simply they thought illness was a curse from God, a demon, or just a malfunction of the body, and microscopic alien life forms did not exist. Once the discovery of these microscopic and the ground work for treatment of these things was clearly visible through documented cases, then the medical society began to accept this new found knowledge into their studies. This same thing holds true for Mold Spores and the mycotoxins they infect us with. One of the best books you can find on the beginnings of this new frontier in medical science is a book called the Mold Warriors, we highly recommend this book. Dr. Ritchie Shoemaker shows documented cases of his Diagnosis and treatment of mold, repeated evidence of his discoveries, and yes, even the medical community is beginning to take notice even though in many cases they don't give him the credit due him. So, the bottom line to this paragraph is that if you become exposed to an excessive and/or repeated exposure to high doses of mold, you may become ill, permanently damaged, or even possibly die without a doctor even being able to pinpoint your problem.

The next phase of our story takes us from the moldy farmhouse to a newer house that was free of mold, but had central air problems. Problems that were so serious, when I told the landlord what the problem was, he refused to fix it and said he would not renew our lease. So we spent the next year searching for a new house, which turned out to be an impossible task. You see, Shelbyville Indiana was a flood plain in a state that was once riddled with swamp land, which creates an undesirable condition for housing when your family has become sensitized to mold. Mold exposure eats away at the myelin sheath that surrounds your nerves, and when this happens you become more sensitive to pollens, molds, and chemicals. Our whole family has developed allergies or sensitivities to all of these things. Searching for a year for a house that was mold free, we did not find one. As we searched, we also spent the year considering moving to the Southwest which we determined we had to do once we could afford it, but we just did not

have the finances to make that kind of move. With one week to spare on our search for a mold free environment, we finally thought we had found something we could live in. We were approved and packed to ready for the move, then I met the security guard in the Walmart parking lot. He asked me about our mold sensitivities, and said "don't move into that apartment because the previous tenant had to move out because she got sick from the mold that had grown in it." He then stated that they remediated the problem, but it keeps coming back and they are constantly fighting it. That coupled with the fact that all the windows were open when we looked at the apartment could explain why we did not smell it or detect it with our throats. This happened on Sunday and we were to move in on Monday. We decided that God was telling us it was time to make the move, financed or not. Rather than spending \$900 to move into an apartment that would make my family sick, which would make us have to break the lease and owe money for that, I decided it was time to make the move. There was little to nothing holding us there. In fact, it meant giving up a \$700/month paper route and it was costing us more than \$1000 for a place to live, we were money ahead to move. So we took our \$1500, a van with 194,000 miles and a tent and we are now camping our way across the country to the drier Southwest.

What You can Glean from our Experience

We have learned a lot about mold and building materials, landscaping, construction techniques, basements, etc. If you have a basement, it should be lined on the exterior side when it is put in with a moisture barrier material. If you finish your basement, do not put wooden framework right up against the concrete walls, you should leave a breather space, probably of at least 18 inches, (check with professionals on the actual distance), use metal studs and instead of using fiber glass insulation, use a foil sided styrofoam board insulation. There are new replacements for drywall, look for the "Stop feeding mold" advertisements and see the new wall materials they are using. The new replacements are not lined with paper which is cellulose which feeds toxic molds like *Stachybotrys*. Make sure your landscaping tapers down away from your house at 1/4 inch per foot of drop at least, all the way around the house. Check your siding, make sure it does not allow rain or moisture to get beyond the siding barrier. In spite of energy efficiency in home construction, do not make your house totally airtight, your house should be capable of breathing. Indoor air quality is rapidly becoming worse than outdoor air due to tight construction for energy savings, and saving a few dollars now could cost you more in the long run in medical expenses.

Secondly, do not take mold lightly. If someone in your family says it is bothering them, don't be in denial just because it isn't affecting you, because eventually it will. If you suddenly come down with Bronchitis, Fibromyalgia type symptoms, constant allergies you never before experienced, question its source carefully. If your doctor says he finds nothing wrong, get another doctor. You know if you're sick or not, and the last thing you need is a slap in the face by some doctor that thinks you are a hypochondriac, the pain, the fevers, the breathing problems, they are real, and Sick Building Syndrome is as serious as a heart attack and potentially twice as fatal.