

Mother Nature's toxic little secret

Mold, in one form or another, is ubiquitous in most homes. But what happens when the mold is toxic? Just ask CNN's Campbell Brown.

Sat, Feb 28, 2009 at 10:57 PM

Mold, like property taxes, is an unpleasantry that homeowners have to deal with. It's the goober growing on the loaf of sourdough that's been sitting around the kitchen for too long; it's the gunk on the shower curtain that won't disappear no matter how vigilant you are about cleaning; it's in the DNA of those Herculean dust bunnies lurking in the corner of the closet; it's the musty, sneeze-inducing smell in the guest bedroom; it's the funk in the floorboard; the dampness in the basement; it's everywhere; it's the fungus among us.

Some, but not all molds, produce dangerous mycotoxins. These molds, referred to as "toxic molds," can compromise human health and are one of the main culprits behind Sick Building Syndrome (SBS).

Last week, The NY Daily News ran a story on CNN anchor Campbell Brown. November's historic election, January's transfer of power in Washington, and the country's ongoing economic woes have surely kept Brown on her feet. And then there's the toxic mold factor.

Prior to the inauguration, Brown, her husband, and her infant son, Eli James, decamped from their apartment posthaste without taking any belongings. Brown and her family have been living in a hotel since January but are soon moving into a new apartment.

Noisy neighbors, leaks, a fire, termites, or construction weren't the culprit behind Brown's decision to scramble out of dodge without even packing. A toxic mold infestation had forced the family out. It all started in September when a mysterious illness struck Eli James, now 14 months old. When in the apartment, he suffered what Brown called "serious coughing attacks" and a "cold that wouldn't end." When the family was anywhere but the apartment Eli James' symptoms vanished.

Brown tells the Daily News:

"When something like this happens, you become an expert in toxic mold. But I certainly realized how fortunate that I am, in this economic climate, that we had the ability to get out. When they said, 'You need to get your baby and get out now,' we were able to get out."

Brown and her family are fortunate that the mold/sickness connection was made before Eli James grew more seriously ill. Not everyone, however, is so lucky. If you suspect something strange and sickening is afoot in your home, it's a wise to become educated in the ways of toxic mold. Remember, you don't necessarily have to see it for it to be present in your home.

Below is a list of online resources that can help you detect, prevent, and deal with a toxic mold infestation.

- The US Environmental Protection Agency offers comprehensive information on mold like basic cleanup, your health, and indoor air regulations.

- The Toxic Mold Resource Center provides mold-centric news, information, and solutions.
- Mold-Help is an informative site committed to mold facts, resources, news, and links to mold testing and remediation services.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has general information, facts about cleanup, removal, and remediation, and links to other resources covering everything and anything mold.
- Doctor Fungus is a treasure trove of everything you ever wanted to know about mycology but were afraid to ask. Read up on Sick Building Syndrome, fungal infections, and more.
- MSNBC reports on the wave of toxic mold that's spread throughout the soggy South in the wake of Katrina and other storms. The article compares mold in the South to an "interior version of Kudzu" and discusses the various health risks.

Your city, county, or state most likely has a handful of mold detection, removal, and/or remediation services, as well as mold litigation attorneys, if needed. Inquire at your local health or environmental services department or simply open up ye olde Yellow Pages.

Source: <http://www.mnn.com/the-home/blogs/mother-natures-toxic-little-secret>