Are Agar Plate Tests Worth It? What You Need to Know Transcript

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Podcast Intro and Disclaimer

We're going to talk about a test that has become extremely popular, especially as more healthcare providers suggest it to their patients. And that test is Auger Plate Mold Testing.

We've all seen that they're inexpensive, they are super easy, and they promise answers. But do they actually give you meaningful information? We will talk that.

You've tried everything. You changed your diet, you've detoxed, and you even moved homes. And yet you still feel sick. Headaches, brain fog, fatigue that no one can explain.

What if it's not you? What is your environment? Welcome to Mold Microtoxins and More. I'm John Bowie. Each week I sit down with experts uncovering how mold, microtuxins, environmental exposures affect your health and what real recovery looks like.

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What Agar Plate Testing Is

Welcome back to Mold Microtoxins and More, the podcast where we break down mold, microtaxins, indoor air quality, and how these things actually affect real people and real buildings.

I'm your host John Bodie, co-founder of The Mould Pros. This episode is part two of our four-part series on DIY mold testing. In the last episode, we covered Hertz B2 testing, what it is, how it works, when it's useful, why those numbers are so often misunderstood.

Well today, we're going to talk about a test that has become extremely popular, especially as more healthcare providers suggest it to their patients. And that test is Auger Plate Mold Testing.

We've all seen them. They're inexpensive, they're super easy, and they promise answers. But do they actually give you meaningful information? We will talk about that.

So let's start with exactly what is an auger plate? An augers plate is a petri dish that's filled with a nutrient gel designed to grow microorganisms like mold or yeast.

There's really not much to the test. It's pretty simple to use as I mentioned. You open the plate, you leave it exposed in a room, You close it, wait a few days, and you see what grows.

Pros of Agar Plate Testing

If mold grows, people assume there's a problem. And if nothing grows they assume everything's fine. Well, unfortunately, that logic doesn't hold up and I'll explain why.

But first, let's start with some of the pros of auger plates. As I mentioned, they're low cost and they are easy to use. You can find them online, you can them at certain labs that sell them and ship them out to you.

Or you could find it at your Home Depot or Home Improvement Store. The second pro, and I think this is probably really important, is seeing mold grow can be visually validating, especially for people who've had concerns and no one's listening to them, their family members may think they're crazy or dismissed them.

And seeing that little fuzzy growth on your new science experiment, it's definitely cool. It's a little disgusting, but it does offer some validation in that regard.

The third pro, the purpose of an auger plate really is to show viable molds, living organisms. Laboratories have used augers plates to grow molds for decades.

There is an educational awareness component to it, is probably the fourth positive about an agar plate. and they can really help start a conversation.

So those are the kind of the four pros of an auger plate and the value that they bring there. Now let's talk about the cons and their substantial.

Why Agar Plates Can Mislead

First of all, mold is everywhere. According to the CDC and EPA, Mold spores are always present in indoor air and outdoor air. so growth on an Auger Plate is normal.

It is not diagnostic. Next, the auger plates don't measure exposure. They dont tell you what people are breathing in. You don tell you how much theyre breathing or how often they're breathing these things in, and the EPA and World Health Organization are pretty clear.

The exposure is about dose and duration, not random deposition. Third, the results on the auger plate can be really highly variable. There's things that impact the test results, such as airflow.

Are there ceiling fans operating? Are the HVACs operating, if so, how much? How much air is getting circulated around? Humidity. If you listen to some of our other podcasts, we've talked about xerophilic molds like aspergillus and penicillium.

that don't need a water leak, they only need elevations of humidity to thrive. And so humidity can have a big impact on those results. The third item that has a lot of impact is placement.

Where you put the auger plates in the room? Is it near an HVAC vent that gets things blowing on them or contaminants blowing them, that could have a big impact on those results.

And even something as mundane as foot traffic. That creates airflow issues just walking by it. So that can impact your results as well. An uncommon to see two plates in the exact same room have completely different outcomes.

and that's why auger plates are not used for professional assessments. Next, most DIY agri-kits, they don't identify the mold to the species level. They dont distinguish between low-risk molds or higher- risk molds.

The don´t detect mycotoxins. And so if you get that scary-looking colony growing in your petri dish, it may be irrelevant, and a serious issue may never show up.

So that's something to consider. Then here's a big one. Not all molds are airborne. According to the CDC and the EPA and other peer-reviewed research, molds like stachybotrys chartrum, what people call black mold, they're heavy, sticky, and they are not easily airborne unless they physically disturb.

They're primarily spread through water movement, insects, rodents, that kind of thing. You've cleaned, repainted, replaced filters. And still, you're not getting better.

Headache, fatigue, brain fog? The doctors can't explain it, but your environment can. At The Mold Pros, we specialize in uncovering what's hidden in plain sight.

Our environmental testing looks beyond surface mold, identifying bacteria, volatile organic compounds, and even microtoxins in the air that you breathe.

Then we correlate those results with your clinical data, showing how your space may be affecting your health. Next, we use our patented remediation process to safely remove toxins, restore balance, and prevent them from returning.

Limits of DIY Mold Kits

It's more than just a cleanup. it's a science-based system designed to help your body heal by healing the environment first. If you're ready to breathe freely again, visit TheMoldPros.com and schedule your free consultation.

Because wellness doesn't start in the doctor's office, it starts where you live. or direct contact with other contaminated building materials. So in theory, you could have significant stachybotrys growth in a room and see little or nothing on an auger plate.

It would give you a false negative. And that leads to the largest risk is either a fault reassurance because minimal growth on the augers plate doesn't mean the building is safe.

The EPA and the World Health Organization both caution against using passive sampling alone to rule out mold exposure. So I know it's a lot of information, but before we wrap up, here's the bottom line on auger plate mold testing.

They have some positives. Uh, they're inexpensive, easy to use, and they can provide that visual confirmation that mold can grow indoors. And they may provide a little bit of insight if you're comparing rooms one to another.

And as an educational tool, it's a good starting point to get a conversation going. I think the cons matter a little bit more. Again, molds everywhere.

So growth on an auger plate doesn't necessarily mean there's no problem. And the augers plates don't measure the exposure or the health risk and the results can vary widely, you know, based on timing and airflow and placement and all those sorts of things.

And these kits don't identify mold at a species level, so you don' know if it's a toxigenic or pathogenic fungal species that's there, you just see this fuzzy stuff.

And you can send it in, it'll usually break it down to the genus level. It'll tell you if its aspergillus or penicillium, but not as pergillas fumigatus or aspargilla flavus, et cetera.

Bottom Line and Next Episode

Again, they don''t detect mycotoxins at all. So if you're concerned with mold toxins, this is not the test for you. And then some really important molds in water damaged buildings like Stacobotrus, they're not easily airborne.

So you can get those false negatives as well. And the biggest risk I think is that false reassurance that results look low when it's just a small portion of the equation.

Auto plates can start a conversation, but they should never be the final answer. They have a purpose, But it's not a great tool for measuring indoor air quality and diagnosing issues there.

Testing should support an investigation. It doesn't replace one. So a good investigation is the first place to start. So in closing, hey, thanks for listening.

I hope you found this episode helpful. If so, please leave a review wherever you're listening to your podcast. Reviews help the show reach people who are trying to make sense of the mold world without getting overwhelmed.

And if you know someone who's confused on DIY testing, maybe they've had an underplate result, they're not quite sure, Please share this with them. And coming up next in part three, we're going to dive into ERMI testing, what it measures, when it's useful, and why these numbers often cause panic when taken out of context.

I'm John Bodie, co-founder of The Mold Pros. Feel free to contact me at www.themoldpros.com or via email at info at themoldpos. com. You've been listening to mold, microtoxins and more.

We will see you next time. Thank you. You've been listening to Mold Microtoxins and More with John Bodie. If you're ready to take the next step towards a healthier home, follow the show and visit TheMoldPros.com for your free consultation.

Because clean air is the first step to true healing.