Introduction to Mold Remediation

You must remove the mold source or remove yourselves from the mold source. I teach people how to do this. A lot of families don't even know that you need to do this fine particle cleaning.

And I think the reason for that is because no one really owns it. You have an inspector who. It specs your home. You have a remediator who removes the mold.

Not all remediators know about mycotoxins. And then no one's looking after this final step, which is actually still remediation. It's removing all the other particulate from your home.

You know, you can remove the mold source to a really good remediation, but if you don't remove the mycotoxins, you are continuing to expose yourself for up to 10 years.

This is Dr. Talks. Welcome back to Demystifying Pan's Pandas podcast. I am so excited to welcome Meredith Pleiter, who is my mold remediation extraordinaire health coach.

Many of you have heard me talk about her. Many of you have asked for her contact. And now here she is. So Meredith is a board certified functional nutrition counselor with a background in medical radiation, natural nutrition, and a passion for understanding how both what we eat and the spaces we live in, including air quality, affect our health.

Originally from Australia, so I also love her accent, Meredith has worked in hospitals across Queensland, London, Boston, before transitioning into the medical device industry, and ultimately following her true passion, supporting families through complex pediatric health challenges like PANS, pandas, and autism by helping them uncover and address underlying conditions, including those influenced by environmental triggers and lifestyle factors.

She blends her personal experience with professional expertise and Meredith Guy's parents in understanding how nutrition, the body, and physical spaces all play a role in a child's healing journey.

She brings a grounded, compassionate, practical approach to helping each family find what truly supports their lasting wellness.

Meredith Pleiteru2019s Background and Expertise

Meredith, you are a gem, you are a joy to work with, and you are the Mold Maven when it comes to our environment. So welcome. Thank you. That's amazing, Dr.

Hara. Thank you so much. It's a pleasure to be here. Well, you know, I know you could talk on many different subjects for hours and hours and hours, but because mold really affects so many of our children and because it is so misunderstood, especially the testing, the remediation, I really want to focus on that on our podcast today.

So you have told me that there are seven non-negotiables to ensure a successful mold remediation. So tell me about that. Yeah, absolutely. Actually, I have eight now.

I've slipped a new one in. And it's just, you know, it's through my experience with helping families that, you know, I've compiled this list of what I've seen is really successful.

And, you know, there are common traps that families fall into. If there's ever been a failed remediation, I can tell you it falls into one of these. eight things.

So the first one and the most important one is you must remove the mould source or remove yourselves from the mould source. And, you know, it's a tough one.

There's so many challenges with this. Right. And it's really hard for families who are already under so much stress because their children are ill, there's so much going on and they didn't, you know, no one's thinking about mould.

We can't typically see it in our homes and then all of a sudden now we're being told we've got mould and we have to remove it and how much is this going to cost and how am I going to do this.

So sometimes the feeling is, OK, well, you know, I think we're OK. We're just going to keep doing our thing. And, you know, maybe there's other things that we can do and maybe there's more supplements, maybe there's stronger medicines.

These are the things that families ask for. But, you know, if we want true healing, we have to remove the mold. Yeah. And it's so interesting. I was talking to a family this morning that is a big fan of yours.

And they had a child who was diagnosed on the autism spectrum, really not doing well, not speaking, very behaviorally affected. And you and I together told her that they need to move out of mold.

They did that. She no longer has the diagnosis. Within months, She is in a typical preschool. They are not living in mold. Everybody is happier because the other thing I was going to say is families don't forget that you're living in it too.

And often we see that moms or dads, somebody else that's affected by it may have some amount of brain fog, may have some amount of their own symptoms that's keeping them from seeing the big picture.

The First Non-Negotiable: Remove the Mold Source

So if Merida says, you got to move out of mold, or you got to remove the mold source, A number one, listen to Merida. So keep going. Thank you. Yeah. And, you know, the rest are in no particular order, right?

That one is definitely a big one, but the rest are no particular order. So There really is no replacement for remediation, right? This is key. So there are a lot of tools that we can use while we're waiting for remediation.

These are things like, you know, air purifiers, fogging, right? These are really good tools, but they're a part of what I consider the remediation. So this kind of goes alongside the must remove the mold source.

But you know, I've had, I've had clients come to me, probably about 40% of my clients are ones who've had a remediation somewhere in the past. And I go back and I analyze all of their inspections and all their reports and things.

And sometimes when families are given this inspection report, it's a lot of information, a lot of overwhelm, a lot of dollar signs attached with it, they go looking for other answers.

And I've had cases where unfortunately a remediation company will just sell this family a fogging kit. or they'll, we'll do this for you, we'll fog it for you.

It's still a big dollar item, but we're not removing the mold source. And so, you know, the family may feel better for a few months, but then they're seeing that healing isn't being reached and symptoms are coming back.

And, you know, they think there's no mold in their house anymore. And it's so sad. And now it's a year later and we're doing another inspection and we're addressing it all again.

So that's a big one. Yeah. And I've had a lot of families where they feel like they've done the remediation right, but they have not. And they've spent tens and thousands of dollars and they didn't do it correctly.

So if it's not, Meredith, you need a mold remediation expert. And the other thing that I hear a lot is parents say, well, I live in a new home, so I can't have mold.

But remember, especially during COVID, a lot of the particle board was in big tanks offshore for months and got wet and moldy, and that particle board got put in between your walls, behind your Your sheetrock, I don't even know what I'm talking about, but you know what I mean.

It's in there. It's in the walls. And, you know, just because you have a new home doesn't mean you don't have mold. And just because you have an old home, you know, we have a home that was built in 1900, and it is solid and not moldy.

There's so many different factors. So, okay, you've mentioned a couple. Keep going. No, absolutely. And that's very intuitive of you, Dr. O'Hara, because that was actually my next one.

And that is, I believe that remediation is only as good as the inspection, right? So if you have an inspector that comes into your home, spends an hour, Looks for mold put some air samples and even all your rooms, right?

And then comes back and says, you know, two things are going to happen. One of one of two things are going to happen. It's either going to be This is great.

There's no mold. You are free to go on. Congratulations. You've got to, your home has a clean bill of health, right? And so that's what you do. You can go on, but still nothing's changing.

Your, your child is still ill and you're like racking your brain. You don't know what to do. So that's, that's one. The second one is there's the mold source, right?

There's the mold source. So let's. You know, we're going to remediate that. And so you do that and you think everything's gone great. And this was actually not as bad as what you thought.

But that inspector only did air testing, right? Perhaps. And they're only they're looking for mold, but they're not looking for the signs of water damage.

They're not looking for hidden mold and most times there's more than one source. I don't recall ever seeing an inspection report where there was only one mold source.

So, you know, then you're doing that remediation and you think everything's great and but now it's a year later and things are still not right and you're back again to do it all over again.

And that is a huge cost. So I vet every inspector I send a family and, you know, I have clients all over the country, right? So I'm collecting an amazing database.

But if I have a client in an area where I don't know an inspector yet, I'm going to vet them. And actually, just last week, I was on the phone for an hour with somebody, right?

And I was like, it was looking really good. Everything was sounding great. And I'm like, oh, this is really good. And I get to the question where I ask him, how do you address the HVAC system?

And he was like, well, you know. I've kind of stepped away from that a little bit. I'd leave that to the HVAC specialist. It's really not in my lane. Like, what do you mean it's not in your lane?

This is your lane. Like the HVAC people are not testing for mold. Like you're testing for mold. This is your lane. And I'm like, oh, I just was like, I was just had such despair, right?

Why Inspection Quality Determines Remediation Success

Because this is how hard it is to find Good morning, Spectre. And I even called this guy back a week later. And I'm like, remember that HVAC conversation?

Can we just address that? I'm like, if I sent you a client, would you do it for me? And I was listening to myself thinking, no. What am I doing? But that's how hard it can be.

And I think there are two very important points there. One, air samples are not accurate and alone. And seeing visible mold, whether it be in your bathroom, on your ceiling, under the sink, is only the tip of the iceberg.

There are so many other areas where it can be. And unless you test for it, you're not going to find it. I remember the first home we had there was a leak under the sink and we were away and you know that that was an area that needed to be remediated but we happened to get and this was by luck or divine intervention we happened to get a great inspector who tested the whole house and he said it's in the walls in this office but I can't figure out where it's coming from we had a hidden crawl space that the previous owners that we never knew about, but Lowe that office that was just filled with mold.

And we ended up having to sell the house for the land. But it's that sort of thing you really need to be complete. And then the second piece of what you said is the HVAC systems.

That's the heating, ventilation, air conditioning are so important. That's what's gonna spew it through the house, whether you're doing your heating or your air conditioning.

And unless that is found and cleaned and whatever other words you want to use, Meredith, appropriately, you're missing a lot of the mold. Yeah, absolutely.

The darked work, they're the lungs of your home and that's how I think of them. Oh, I like that. Good line. Okay, I'll use that one now. I really like for people to really make sure they understand their inspection report and follow the guidelines.

It also comes back to a little bit of prevention stuff too, which I'm all about. I actually encourage my families to walk the inspection with the inspector.

Yes, it's going to take a whole afternoon, but you're going to learn so much about your home that you never knew before. And this is where it starts. Like we have to educate ourselves, right?

I'm going to educate you on mold and remediation, but you can educate yourself with somebody in your own home. and learn so much valuable information.

And yes, you're going to get a report that nothing beats being there with the inspector, I think. And then a lot of families, they get their inspection report and they send it to me.

And they're like, OK, can we talk about this? And yes, absolutely. But also, I want you to phone your inspector. You paid for this report. Like, throw your questions to the inspector who is the expert in this.

Learn. And then, yes, any other questions or anything you want like double, you know, we can discuss that. But, you know, you've paid for this. So you use that wisely.

And I think it's just about being responsible. This is like being responsible for what you do with your home and doing it yourself and even, you know, I can tell you.

I've seen an HVAC company come in to do that annual inspection, and you change out the filters for your HVAC. And I guess this guy didn't have the proper sized one in his van.

And so he gets one and he cuts it down and he puts it in. Like this is, that's criminal. That's like, it's ill fitting. So now your system is breathing in air that's not going through the filter.

take responsibility for everything in your home and check the work of everyone that does something in your home. Yeah. And you know, I often say in caring for our kids with pans, pandas, tick-borne disease, mold illness, it takes a village.

And I can just in my head hear a lot of the moms and dads, I don't have time to spend an afternoon following a guy around or making sure that the HVAC person is doing the right thing.

Well, this is where you use your village. You know, your best friend that's always asking you, what can I do to help? The kid down the street that needs an extra 10 bucks an hour.

The grandfather. You know, somebody else in your family to follow that person around and take meticulous notes and whatever. Yes, it is great if you can do it, but somebody needs to be doing it if you yourself are working full-time or can't leave your children or whatever it may be.

So use your village. Absolutely. That's a great message. Yeah. And then, you know, I think this is a prevention one, too. It's really important that you understand the conditions of the home that led to the mold source, right?

So, leak or a flood or an event like this, OK, that's quite simple, right? We know and we understand that. We remediate and then we make sure that, you know, if it's the roof that we're fixing these issues, right?

But if humidity was the cause, it's really important that we know that and understand what to do about that because we may go through this remediation, but if we don't address humidity as the cause, then it's going to happen again.

And you may think that you've got a failed remediation, but actually the remediation could have been fine. It's that you have a new exposure and you can be going through this year after year and that's awful.

So, you know, knowing and understanding the conditions of the home that led to the mold source and then factoring that into your remediation, right? Is it portable units that you need in the basement?

that self drain or is it a whole home dehumidifier, right? And, you know, if we're in the Northeast, like you and I are, some of these things we don't really think about the Northeast as being a humid place.

But actually, you know, the last couple of years, we've had humidity from May through October. Right? And so it's an easy trap and a lot of families don't know that actually humidity is the leading cause for mold in a home, not a flood or a roof leak.

Yep, absolutely.

Fine Particle Cleaning and Mycotoxin Removal

And that piece of self-draining dehumidifier, if you don't get it on your whole house, you know, a lot of people say, well, I have a dehumidifier and I dump it, you know, that's not really accurate, adequate, because I tried to do that the second time I had mold and trying to cheap out on it.

We're going to get to the money part at some point. But, you know, it didn't work because one day I would forget or one day I'd be gone longer and it would fill up.

And then shut off. And you're losing that effect if you're using it that way. Yeah, exactly. And the self-draining ones are very cost effective. So they're a great tool.

And the next one? I really encourage families to do their post-remediation testing. Yes. Right. Families that don't do this. Right. I mean, how do you really know at the end of the day if your remediation has been successful?

And yes, it's another cost. Right. But here's the thing. If you do the post remediation testing, it's on the remediator to fix what they haven't done.

Right. Right. It's not on your dollar. But you can't go back to that remediator 12 months later and say, right, so It's an upfront cost. It's not as expensive as your initial inspection because they're just inspecting the remediated parts.

Okay. And you know, if you think about like, you know, let's use the body as an example. If we have a lesion on our skin that we're cutting out, don't we go and follow up?

Yeah. So I like to think of the building in similar terms as our bodies. Yeah. Now, I don't know if you're going to address this in some of your other non-negotiables, but you're doing the remediation.

And let's say you've done the testing and the remediation is really in the kitchen and the bathrooms, or the remediation is just in the basement. Can you live in the home?

during the remediation? And if so, are there things you can do to mitigate the spread while you're living there? Yes, absolutely. Because not everyone can move out of their home, right?

And in fact, I would say most of my clients don't move out of their home unless their remediation is multi, like eight rooms in a house, right? So yes.

Absolutely. And you know, when you use a professional qualified remediator, which I highly encourage, they're going to put a lot of these safety mechanisms in place, right?

So they're going to contain the basement, for example, they're going to put up six mil plastic sheeting that's got like a zippered entrance that nobody else is going in and out of except for the remediators.

And you can happily be in the rest of your space while that's being Now, I will say this throughout remediation and especially fine particle cleaning.

We'll talk about that in a little bit. It can cause flares in your children's symptoms. And, you know, because the sealing off is not perfect, right? It's extremely good, but, you know, any little crack.

Yeah. And I think a couple of things there, you know, the sealing off is key. I've heard so many people, it's just the bathroom, we close the door. No, that area when you're remediating because you're pulling it all up.

And the other thing, I think we should step back a minute because we didn't really talk about the symptoms or the testing that lead me to refer somebody to you.

And I think, you know, the symptoms are global. I mean, the biggest things are ice pick sensations and zippy pains down your spine and neuropathy, meaning numbness and tingling, brain fog, you know, any kind of cognitive decline.

But really, for the kids with pans, pandas, and all the children that I see, Almost any symptom could be mold. Almost any. And it can be neuropsychiatric only.

It can be respiratory only. And one member of the family can have neuropsychiatric symptoms. One member of the family can have respiratory symptoms. One member of the family can have gut symptoms.

So it can really be global. So it's something that I try to convince or encourage families to test for, either with a urine mycotoxin test or a blood test.

And there is a specialty lab called Myomyco that does good blood testing and a couple of You're in labs that do good mycotoxin testing. Jill Christa particularly likes vibrance mycotoxin.

I particularly like real-time. Mosaic is also a very good one. And then there's a lot of conventional blood work that can be done. But in my 30 years of experience, I have found that often, especially in children, that blood work is still normal.

So it's not helpful in identifying the mold-affected kids. You may see that in adults, you know, abnormalities in MSH, VEGF, you know, C4, et cetera, many, many lists of them.

But I really, because it's easier, and helpful get that urine mycotox. It's high. My first recommendation right in my chart part is talk to Meredith. Then they have their next consult.

They haven't called you yet. I'm like, I'm not doing anything else until you talk to Meredith. But anyway, all right, I digress. What's your next non-negotiable?

So the next one is it's called fine particle cleaning. Yeah, so this is a big one for many, many reasons. So first of all, like when I first see a family, I do a lot of education about what mold is and the byproducts of mold.

Right. And these are the spores of mold fragments. mycotoxins and bacteria that's associated with mold. So I go through all of that and try to give a lot of education, because that's the terminology we're going to use all throughout this.

So we refer to this as the particulate. And, you know, if you take that basement example that we talked about, if you have a mold source in a basement, you still have to address the whole home because this particulate is moving through air currents in your home.

So, you know, when you open a door and another one closes, like, that's the air currents. And so particulate is moving through the home And then it's settling on horizontal surfaces and often in the dust, right?

So, and horizontal surfaces, the biggest one is the floor, but it's also, it's our, it's our beds, right? It's our desks, it's our clothes, it's, you know, so it's severing on these things and, you know, the mycotoxins, to go back to your point earlier, it's these mycotoxins that are most harmful to human health and are affecting any and every body system.

And so we have to remove them. And there's a really like, there's a set protocol that's quite disciplined in how we do it. And I teach people how to do this.

A lot of families don't even know that you need to do this fine particle cleaning. And I think the reason for that is because no one really owns it, right?

You have an inspector who inspects your home. You have a remediator who removes the mold. But not all remediators know about mycotoxins, actually. And then so you do the remediation and then no one's looking after this final step, which is actually still remediation.

It's removing all the other particulate from your home and content. So it's equally. just a big of a step and, you know, you can remove the malt source, do a really good remediation, but if you don't remove the micro toxins, you are continuing to expose yourself for up to 10 years.

It's incredible. That's very scary. Wow. Say that again. So micro toxins continue to expose us for up to 10 years. And we can't see mycotoxins and we can't smell them.

So the only way to know that they're there is that we test for them. And, you know, it can be an expensive test. So here's what I do if you don't want to spend the 399 on the mycotoxin test.

If we know from other tests, and this is why we do more than just air testing, right, if we know from other tests the species of the mould, say you've done an ERMI or you've done like a swab or a tape lift, we know, I know if that mould is a mycotoxin producing mould, so then we're going to assume you have mycotoxins in your home and we're going to going to clean it.

So and you know there's there's a whole process and it starts with HEPA vacuuming your whole home. This is where that we then introduce fogging and then we introduce what we call wet wiping and the wet wiping is it's a practice that you continue for the rest of your life now.

Like it replaces feather dusting and dry dusting, right? Like it replaces moving dust from one end of the shelf to the other end of the shelf. We want to remove the dust and with that, the particulate and the HEPA vacuum.

I mean, the first question is, you know, we talk about your vacuum. Like, do you have a vacuum cleaner? What is it? You know, it has to be, I mean, do you want to know what I look for in a vacuum cleaner?

Yeah. Yeah, please. I want to know, but I also want to make sure I have the right word ahead. I'm sure everybody listening is, tell me, tell me. So it needs to be a true HEPA filtered vacuum cleaner.

So it should have a 99.97% trap rate. And then I like vacuums that have a bagged waste system, right? If it's an open canister, That you're in your kitchen, you're open your bin, you open it up, tap, tap, tap.

You get this dust cloud of particulate in your face now and you're breathing that in and that hard work, that hour you just spent vacuuming is now in your face.

And then the third thing, which is a little bit harder to understand is, or to find, is the seams of the unit itself should be really tight with no leakage so that everything that you're pulling in the vacuum is going through the filter.

This may not be the item in your house you get at Goodwill. You know. Yeah. Yeah. But I have a human every different price point for people. Yeah. Yeah.

I can help you with that. And I want you to get through your non-negotiables and then we'll do the pricing and things like that. But one of the points I want to reiterate of this is dead mold plus humidity is still mold.

Exactly. Acinomyces, you know, mold fragments, mold spores. All of those things are important and that's why air testing and even what's your opinion on mold dogs?

Testing Methods: ERMI, HERTSMI, and Mycotoxins

I feel like there is a place for them. Okay. Certain circumstances. Okay. And here's what they are because, and I know different dogs all over the country, right?

And the dogs are trained, typically trained to what their owners want to use them for, because typically their owners have been in a really arduous, like long mold situation, right?

So there are some dogs that are super, super sensitive so much so that I think they… they're detecting moisture even, like even the smallest little bit of moisture.

And so you can come up with a report that's like a hundred line items long. And that's tricky because then where do you go with that, right? You can't go investigating a hundred different items.

So they're not my go-to, but I think they're great for the really, really tough tough situation where they've been like multiple remediations and we still can't find the mold source.

And that exists. And we had one recently, actually, and talk about taking a village. We had two mold inspectors, a mold dog, me, like a whole village.

But you know what? We got there very successfully. So, you know, that was an unusual circumstance, that particular one. But yes, but so I love them for the right Got it.

Yeah. And maybe, and you may be doing this later, but maybe address, you know, we have a lot of practitioners, educated listeners on here, but there may be people who don't even know some of the acronyms that we're using.

Could you let people know what like an ERMI or hurts me means? Yeah. Yep, so an Ermi is an environmental readiness mold index, and it's been around for a while.

It was developed by the EPA, but actually wasn't developed as a testing tool. So it has a little bit of a design downside. The Ermi score that you get, actually, I don't even look at that because it takes Group 1 molds and Group 2. Group 1 is water damage molds.

Group 2 is common household molds. And it minuses Group 2 from Group 1. Well, that doesn't make sense. Your mold burden is Group one and group two together is your whole whole thing.

So that doesn't make sense. But so I don't use it for that. But I look at the individual species that come up that gives us a lot of information and it's a really accurate test.

It is it does give you historical data. So if you've done a remediation and you didn't find particle clean and you do an ERMI, you're going to pick up the DNA of the mold that was there in the remediation.

So we need to understand the traps that we can fall into with it. And then the hurts me score I love because it takes five of the most harmful mold species to human health and it applies a health score to it.

And I think this is super helpful with trying to explain to families about, you know, because a lot of families are like, well, how bad is my situation?

Right. Because these species and these numbers to them, they don't mean anything. Right. And so that hurts me. I use it as a screening tool also. But I.

That hurts me. You need to be under 10 to be like in a green light. Or if you're 10 to 14, it's like very suspect. If you're over 14 or over 16, it tells you that you shouldn't be in that occupied space if you've had an exposure to mold in the past.

So, you know, if I'm helping somebody look for short-term accommodation, I have them do an ERMI. You can do it yourself. And, you know, it helps us find a good short-term accommodation.

Or if you're buying a house or you're going to rent a new place, it's the tool that we use because it's going to prevent you from going into, from one mold situation to another mold situation.

So really that's, I love it for that. Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. Thank you for explaining that. I learned something too. And what's your next non-negotiable?

Um, so, and this one, like this was my latest one. Um, and it's not really a non-negotiable and, and, you know, I kind of, I just struggle with the, with calling it, with calling some of these non-negotiables, right?

Because I'm not really. You know, I don't want these to be hard and fast rules. I want there to be some flexibility because, you know, I'm always going to give you best practice textbook advice, right?

But then life always gets, there's life, life gets in the way and we can't always do all of this. But my last one is about love and understanding, right?

Living Through Remediation and Minimizing Exposure

Because not everybody, not every mum and dad, not every husband, wife, partner, partner sees eye to eye on this stuff. And it really makes me sad because some of these families, this prevents them to even getting to remediation, right?

And it's not hugely common, but it's unusual for partners to 100% agree on absolutely everything, right? And everyone's going through stresses anyway.

So I just… I always, you know, I never, I always say to everybody, you know, everybody is going to, as they express their mold illness differently, we express our stresses and everything differently.

So I encourage openness, love and understanding and respect for one another through this process. And yeah. I think that's so true in our society in general.

You know, we all have differing thoughts, opinions, and if we can act out of love for the other person, even when that's different, that goes a long way.

And it goes also to everything we do in taking care of our kids. And one of the things I often say to the parents I take care of, and those who have listened to many of the podcasts will hear me say this multiple times, is I'm your GPS.

I'm going to give you the best route to go down. And I may be a pushy GPS and tell you why this route is so much better than all the other ones. But there are several ways to go about it.

And coming together as parents, as partners, as families, and finding a middle ground that is still safe, especially when it comes to mold, but not getting everything your way is part of that living with compassion.

And that's one of the things that I've learned over 30 years of being a practitioner. I'm not going to get everything my way and the kids I take care of.

But sometimes, a lot of times, they'll still get better even if they don't do everything my way. And it is a journey. And absolutely, you know, I'm happy to be the bad cop.

Meredith can be the good cop with these people, but I'm happy to be the bad cop for you anytime. And I wanted to go back to the fine particle cleaning a little bit and the HVAC, because I've had several instances where you have found one little thing that they didn't do, like the washing machine gasket, like the dishwasher filter.

like the mist-sized filter in the HVAC. That is so important, you know, and that's why I think having somebody like you, or hopefully you, for a lot of the people out there, is so important to find those things.

Because I've had many instances where families have felt they've done everything, and you found that the washing machine gasket or something in the refrigerator needed to be fixed, and that was a game changer.

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. I mean, even things as simply as like, well, it's this is not always simple, but once a year removing your appliances, like refrigerator and the oven, especially where food can get caught and like, It can be very simple, but cleaning HEPA vacuuming under those surfaces, the backs of those surfaces, because, you know, especially anything with a fan that draws in dust, like that accumulates.

You'll be shocked the first time you pull something out to clean that. It's incredible. Yeah. Okay, Meredith, I may have to move, but I'll try to do that when I get home.

Now, what about the families who are sitting here saying that I have no money, I have spent so much money, or I live in an apartment and the landlord won't do squat, or, you know, we know the ideals and we have to do this right, but do you have any words of wisdom for those families?

Yeah, no, absolutely. And, you know, and this is what I do with families while they're waiting for remediation, right? Because, you know, you don't have to remediate everything all at once, right?

You can, if you do a really good inspection and you know what needs to be done, you can do something this year, something next year, like, and you're moving, you're working towards that goal, right?

If you're in a situation where you just, you can't remediate at all, There are definitely some, you know, what I call minimization strategies that we use and they're very effective.

And the first one is the vacuuming. I mean, it's crazy how effective it is. So if you're in this situation, if you vacuum two to three times a week, And I'm not just talking the floors, like the floors, like almost every day, right?

But getting up, vacuuming the vents in your ceiling, vacuuming the tops of window frames and door frames, these are the things that typically don't get cleaned in a bi-weekly cleaning schedule.

You know, you get your vacuum cleaner, you use that small brush attachment and you really get in there and you HEPA vacuum everything, including your contents.

And, you know, you can be hyper vacuuming your contents once every week or two. Right? It's time consuming. Some families have help with their cleaning though.

So give these items to your cleaning help or family that's helping. And, you know, I've had families email me and say, you know, I can't believe this, but they see symptom improvement just from cleaning.

The cleaning is so key. And, you know, I often, I always in the back of my mind, I always try to ask the question, or keep in my own mind, what if the keys to healing weren't in a prescription, but what if they were in the spaces that we live in?

Some of these are within our reach, and that's how we care for our homes in the spaces that we live in. And it reminds me to remind families to look up, look under.

You know, a lot of times I remember a mom who had a lot of OCD herself, and we had treated tick-borne diseases, we had treated yeast, we had treated so many abnormalities, and the child wasn't getting better, and she was a meticulous cleaner, but she never looked up.

And one day she was carrying her computer talking to me and she lifted it so I could see the ceiling. And I said, could you look at that? And the vent in his bedroom was black.

And she just had never looked up. And another time it was under the sofa, you know, that they had never moved. You know, there are these little things that can be done.

And certainly, you know, for those of you who are listening to a lot of these demystifying Pans Pandas podcasts, you know that I've already interviewed several others, including Jill Christo, I think.

is one of our best practitioners in dealing with mold. And we've talked about a lot of ways we do it within our children, within ourselves. And of course, all of that has to be done, but that is married with our homes, our lifestyles.

And let's not forget about our cars. Yeah, absolutely. And our schools. Yeah. So can you say a few words about either one of those? Yeah, definitely. And also, I just want to mention area rugs.

Practical Strategies for Homes, Cars, and Schools

Yeah, area rugs and even a very simple practice of using indoor outdoor shoes. Right. Leave your outdoor shoes by the door, slip on indoor shoes. Yeah.

Yeah, we forget about our cars. Our cars have carted sports bags and our belongings backwards and forwards. And so the same deal applies. Fine particle cleaning your car.

HEPA vacuuming. There are solutions I use to spray on non-porous surfaces and HEPA vacuuming. So HEPA vacuuming, spraying and then HEPA vacuuming if it's like a leather or a fabric.

So yeah, don't forget about the cars and then the schools. You know, this can be a tough one. And as you know, and like we always, we always say, you know, let's, let's always check the home.

We're going to rule out the home because that is what we know is a hundred percent within our control. Right. The schools can be really challenging. A good place to start is each state has different laws about what testing they do

or don't do and how they communicate that.

So understanding the state laws is the first step. I think, and then, you know, enrolling at your own home. And then also, you know, you can address this with the schools.

And we've done this with a few families and I have a couple right now, especially school just went back, right. And sometimes they can be very open. with you and helpful, but then there are still, you know, they might agree to an inspection, but they'll get an inspector and he's only doing an air test, right?

So, you know, sometimes I've even said to families, look, you know what, if you can, and they're agreeable to it, you know, you could consider paying for an inspection of the school.

Right. There's kind of like every situation is different and we, we work together for that particular situation, but there's also, you know, change the air foundation, have a great couple of podcasts on there about people who've experienced this with schools.

So I recommend going to the, to that website and listening to those. They're great. Change the air foundation. Yes. Changed the air foundation. Changed the air foundation.

And I talk to families, especially in our little kids who are only in one classroom, offering to buy an air purifier or HEPA filter in that classroom.

I talk about essential oil sticks or sprays in the nose before they go into the classroom. We have some new ones in our office and there are also ones provided by Jill and there are some on Amazon.

We talk about binders after the school day to try to bind some of that out. Yeah. And there are lots of little things that you may be able to do to mitigate it.

But, you know, there are many areas and don't forget about church basements and synagogues, you know, a lot of our kids are in therapy in very moldy areas.

So think about all these other spaces too. Yeah, no, definitely. And there is actually new to market, there's a wipe for mycotoxins. Yeah. So great for traveling.

Yes. Be going to a hotel. Don't forget. Don't forget this. I have walked into many hotel rooms with one of my colleagues who will be on this podcast soon, Dr.

Elizabeth Bumper, who she'll be there before me and she'll go in and unpack all her stuff and I'll walk in and I'll say, Liz, we're not staying in this room.

It's moldy. You know, when you get that sense after you've lived in it or, you know, you have that spidey sense, trust your gut. And pun intended, you know, it is going to affect you if you stay in those areas and you can make a change if you need to, or you can do things, as Meredith is saying, for these places you have to stay in that may not be optimally clean or mold free.

Absolutely. All right. Now, did you tell us enough or would you like to tell us more about how you lead clients through their journey from the very first positive urine mycotoxin test through remediation and after?

Yeah, no, definitely. And, you know, whether they're coming with that test or they're coming from a past remediation, I always start with education first and, you know, then getting to know more about their specific situation because every situation is different.

No two are the same. Right. And usually it leads to an inspection. And, you know, even if it's a repeat inspection, I'm sending somebody new, different, someone I've vetted, it's someone with fresh eyes.

And 100% of the time, we've always found. another mold source or more. So I'm still waiting for the negative one, right? So it's not wasting money. It's a good thing to do.

So, you know, and I'll give clients, I hope to give them three inspectors. to sometimes, depending on where you live, I may only be able to find one. But after I've gone through those conversations with them, you can feel confident in the person that I've sent you.

And then, you know, there's usually this time period between inspection and remediation, right, where we do We start cleaning already. We start, like, talking about, you know, symptom control.

Like, how can we reduce some of these symptoms that the kids are going through while we're waiting for remediation? And that can be very effective with what we've already talked about, the cleaning, using air purifiers, you know, making sure you're getting, you know, that you're opening windows, like, twice a day for 30 minutes and getting airflow in the home.

Like, we… Our houses are so tight, totally built here, but they need to breathe. They really do. So that's super important. And then I have clients start thinking about like purging contents, right?

Because the conversation in your mind has to be, okay, do I really need this because I'm going to have to clean it? Right? Is it worth my while to clean this?

Do I really need it? Right? So that's, you know, the thing that you can start doing. And, you know, for items that are like too hard to address right now, like paper, papers, right?

Books. You can get the big large plastic tubs. put them in the tubs, no cardboard. Cardboard is a food source for mold. And when you're storing things, you want to lift them up off the floor.

Like, you know, if you've got a garage or an attic, like get shelving, pop these large plastic bins in there. So there's lots of things to keep you busy while you're waiting for remediation that are also super helpful for everyone in the family with their symptoms too.

And it is still true that books and poor substances like that can never be thoroughly cleaned enough. Is that correct? So a couple of things, like with books, what I recommend is like to HEPA vacuum all the edges of the books, right?

Working With Families, Resources, and Final Advice

So there is an additional part to this fine particle cleaning that we can do, and it's called a chlorine dioxide bomb. And what it is, is so, you know, we've done hyper vacuuming, fogging, wet wiping, and now we're going to use this bomb because this bomb is a gas that can actually permeate more places in your home that the fog wasn't able to get to.

So it can get. through porous, you know, it can get in to hidden spaces. And before we got started, I was mentioning to Meredith about a doctor who is also a parent who had done all the things correctly.

but her child was still not sleeping at night and still very violent and agitated at night. And everybody was telling her about what supplement to add or what medication to add or anything else, and I said, what's in the bedroom?

And she said, well, I haven't been able to get rid of the stuffed animals. And I said, remove the stuffed animals. Just take them out of her bedroom for three nights and see what happens.

And within three nights, The child was sleeping through the night, and all the symptoms were gone. And, you know, back in the day, when I went through this, we had to remove all those stuffed animals.

We had to buy a new one that I sort of, you know, massaged a little bit to make it look a little worn. But the rest of

them were out of the bedroom. But now what you were saying to me and what you're saying now is this chlorine dioxide bomb might save some of those precious stuffed animals.

So once cleaned in that way, they are safe. And that can be incredible for a lot of our kids that have these lovies that just can't be replaced. Yeah, absolutely.

It's, you know, especially, you know, if they're in bed with these lovies, they're up against their face, they're breathing in these spores all night.

Absolutely. And, you know, I always say to families also anything that can go in the washing machine with the solutions that I recommend, should do that too.

It's just like, and the chlorine dioxide bomb is like the icing on the cake. It's the last thing that we do that. And then we'll test even after that, right?

Just to make sure we're always making sure. And we've had great, great success with this. Yeah. But that's an amazing story about the toy. You and I could talk for 10 more hours.

And we do. Thanks. I am very blessed. But I am now giving others the opportunity to be blessed with Meredith's help. So, Meredith, how do people get in touch with you?

So my website is yourmerryway.com. That's my website. There's information on there. We didn't talk much about food, but I have recipes on there and handouts on things like pet care.

Like we have to think about pets. in world exposure. And, you know, if you want to, if you're really interested in learning more about how functional nutrition and the environment can help you, I would love to walk that path with you.

So, yeah, contact me through the website or my email is meredith. Meredith, you are a wealth of information. I would love to walk any pathway with you.

Thank you for mentioning diet, because it is so important. And again, diet, lifestyle, and being good to yourself as you walk this journey. You know, we talked about our hows needing to breathe.

We need to breathe. This is not easy. And cut yourself some slack, but you can do it, and you need to do it. Absolutely. Yeah, we take it small steps at a time.

Yeah. And any last words of wisdom for all the practitioners or parents out there that are listening? Yeah. I think, you know, the way I see things is, you know, food heals, right?

Food heals. Environment matters. And you're not alone. You're not alone. Meredith, thank you so much. And join us again for the next episode of Demystifying Pam's Pandas.

Thank you so, so much. Thank you for tuning into Doctor Talks. We hope today's episode has enlightened and inspired you on your path to optimal health.

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