Is Your Home Making You Sick? The Hidden Truth About Mold Transcript

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Introduction to Hidden Mold Exposure

One of the things that's really most exciting, I think, since we started doing this years ago is the amount of awareness and information and education that's out there.

And so that is really kind of elevated, I think, what goes on out in the field, which is great news. The other thing to kind of avoid some of that, just like as a clinician would treat a patient, we treat a home the very same way.

So it's all about good diagnostics, good laboratory data, and helping homeowners or our clients make really good data-driven decisions. Welcome to Healthy Choices with your host, Ray Solano from Austin, Texas.

Now here's your host, Ray Solano. Hi, I'm Ray Solano. I'm pharmacist and owner of Prescription Dispensing Labs and here the host of Healthy Choices here under Dr.

Talks. And the topic of our conversation today is your house making you sick. And it's a truth that no inspector wants to really talk about. And again, this is you're listening to Dr.

Talks here on another edition of Healthy Choices. We want to bring this to everyone's attention. It affects families all across the country. I don't care whether it's a 1000 square foot house or a 100,000 square foot house.

You need to be able to understand how something that can cause such a problem in a home that could make it just actually unlivable. So this is something that everyone needs to be understanding.

We're talking about the hidden mold exposure and it's a problem that happens inside homes that can trigger significant health issues and chronic sinus issues, fatigue, respiratory problems, headaches, brain fog, inflammation, and maybe sometimes people just able to either fulfill their job or their profession.

Why Traditional Inspections Miss the Root Cause

It just doesn't really take sides. It's unfortunate. It's just bad for everything. So what's even more concerning is that most traditional mold inspections never really uncover the real problem.

And joining us today is Dr. John Bondi, I'm going to call you a doctor just because you have such a wealth of information to help us with it. He's a nationally recognized mold investigator and an environmental health specialist.

And John has spent years identifying the hidden moisture sources, building failures that like air tests and basic inspections just seem to overlook. His investigative work has helped thousands of homeowners finally understand why their symptoms are not getting better and investigate what's really causing the problem.

You got to get to the root cause, be able to fix it. And so, John, welcome to the program. Thank you very much. Glad to be here. And so just tell us, you know, what inspired you to look beyond traditional mold inspections and, you know, focus on deeper building science approach.

And we'll get into that because you have some good solutions for it. Cause we always like to have happy endings to some of them. We understand these and cover the difficulties.

So tell us what inspired you to really just do something different. You know, it really boils down to being able to make an impact and help people out.

Now, a little bit of our history and our company, the Mold Pros, you know, we started out one of the first practitioners we did work for. We serendipitously were connected with Dr.

Joseph Brewer, who's done a lot of studies and white papers around aspergillosis and colonization and that sort of thing. Well, we wound up doing a project for one of his patients.

And I think, right, we were the third company that came in and did the remediation and the only company that actually was able to pass a post-test for someone that had environmental illness.

And so it was that serendipitous event years and years and years ago, which put us on the path to really focusing on environmental illness and filling the gaps where traditional remediation or inspection companies oftentimes fail.

You know, I think the biggest thing is that people, when they hear about this, you know, it's almost they get scared because they always look at the worst case scenario that it can't be fixed and it's going to cost a fortune.

And there is a cost associated with it, but you've really come up with a way to really make it safe again, right? But there's a lot of misconceptions in the industry, you know, I'm working with I have a commercial, I owned a commercial building here and a complex here.

And we see, we've seen some conflict between contractors and owners.

Data-Driven Mold Diagnostics and Testing

And when we have a mold issue, it's unbelievable when we get attorneys involved and the opinions that everybody every, there's like, there's no way that you're going to get two people to agree on a solution.

And I'm just absolutely amazed that I have to ask the question. You really think that that's going to fix it or it's, I don't know. It just seems to be such a, such a problem.

I can understand why some people just bury their head and say, I don't want to even deal with it. Yeah, no doubt. It can be certainly a litigious industry that we work in, but there are a lot of opinions.

And one of the things that's really most exciting, I think, since we started doing this years ago, is the amount of awareness and information and education that's out there.

And so that is really kind of elevated, I think, what goes on out in the field, which is great news. The other thing to kind of avoid some of that, just like as a clinician would treat a patient, we treat a home the very same way.

So it's all about good diagnostics, good laboratory data, and helping homeowners or our clients make really good data-driven decisions. Well, you know, that's right.

Data-driven and maybe some, you know, a common sense approach to it. And many times if you look at it as the patient, you know, the patient has an illness, right?

And then we fix it. and the person is able to live. So you figured out some ways that you can repair the patient or the environment so that people can be able to move back in and be able to live a normal life, right?

That's right. Regardless of how good the treatment is on the person, if they keep going back and getting re-exposed, their road to wellness is going to be a difficult one for sure.

And so the approach that we recommend, whether they use the mold pros or any other company, is that data-driven approach. You go in, you have really good, thorough testing, good inspections, get to the root cause of why we may have these issues inside of the home.

and then develop a plan. And that plan may be a treatment of the entire structure. It could be isolated to certain areas. But you have data that supports that protocol moving forward.

And that's, in our opinion, that's the best pathway. And then you test afterwards, after the treatment, to validate

that, hey, is return to a normal fungal ecology.

It doesn't always get fixed the first time. Sometimes it has to be a retreat. And so having, again, that data on the backside is extremely as important as, as having on the front side.

So the first thing is to test, right? Test and inspect. Test and inspect. Do you do, let's make it simple. Do you do an aerosol, I guess, collection to see and then speciate it?

Yep. So our, you're absolutely right. We will go through, we believe that the best insights to a home is going to be running different sorts of tests.

I'll give you some examples. So understanding, you know, kind of the standard mold test in the industry is that air spore trap or air test where you compare the exterior to the interior.

And there's some value in that. That's at a genus level. But our inspections, we recommend to go further. And I give you some examples. Not all molds aerosolize, right?

Some are spread like stachybotrys or black mold. Those spores are spread by water, insects, and rodents. So we can take air samples all day long. It may not really discover what's there.

And so a surface sample, in our opinion, whether it's a tape lift or a swab, after doing a thorough inspection, you find something that is suspected microbial growth, do a surface sample.

And that way, you know what's actually growing inside the structure. Could be also doing intra-cavity samples. There could be mold inside of walls. And it's very easy to sample inside of that wall without removing the wall.

And then for some of our folks with environmental illness, we'll do, you mentioned species level testing. We do for toxigenic or pathogenic species, use polymerase chain reaction testing or actually testing for mycotoxins or endotoxins or for formaldehydes or chemicals.

We do all that. Oh, wow. Wow. That's pretty comprehensive.

Enzyme-Based Remediation and Filtration

It is. So once you identify the problem, Okay. You understand then maybe as good as walks us through methodology that you have to be able to remediate.

So it starts again with that good inspection. A good inspection is keeping it simple. Tells us the what, the where, the why. Then the protocol tells us the how to solve it.

And then our approach is going to be really more of a nature versus nature approach. So we use enzymes and botanicals. when we do our treatments. Not chemicals?

Yeah, we don't use a biocide. The EPA says even dead mode has a health concern. So if you kill it with you know, bleach or hydrogen peroxide or maybe in something a little less caustic like thieves oil or what have you, that is dead and the proteins are still be there.

So our approach is use a blend of enzymes that is developed specifically to treat these fungal issues and has been clinically tested and proven effective on removing or biodegrading these mycotoxins.

So it's surface treatments, we aerosolize, we do advanced filtration to get down to, the industry uses HEPA filtration, which gets down to 0.3 microns without getting too mold nerdy on you.

We use an advanced type of filtration that's even tighter than HEPA to remove these finer contaminants. 0.3 is pretty big actually. Yeah. So we use the filtration that gets down to 0.1 microns to help remove those from the

structure.

So, and you don't just treat the structure. Obviously you have to, those contents can get exposed as well. And so we have a process for treating sofas, love seats, case goods, dining tables, nightstands, the all nine yards.

So it's a solution that is applied liquid to the surfaces and aerosolized? It is. That's right. There are a lot of companies that we call them the spray and pray people that just come in and just will atomize something or fog something through a structure and leave.

And molds don't grow in the air. They grow on surfaces. And so you do have to surface treat if you want to, in our opinion, to get an effective treatment.

And so these botanicals, so they're not toxic to the environment or the patients. So this is not something they have to worry about once they come back into it, any residual, so to speak.

As you will know, a lot of our clients are chemically sensitive. The last thing we want to do, it's the old, you know, the cure is worse than the disease sort of thing.

And so we don't want to do that. So we use non-GMO plant-based enzymes. We do use a citrus-based product being made from orange peels. And so at the end of our treatments, the humbles smell a little orangey, which is refreshing for most folks.

But outside of that, everything's on the generally regarded as safe list. Nothing is toxic at all. So it kills the mold. It kills the bacteria. As you mentioned, actinomyces as well.

So it's probably bactericidal, right? Yep. So we have two different products. That's a great question. When it comes to mold, we're going to use an enzyme approach and it's not a biocide.

So we don't say kill, we treat it. And what it does, these enzymes, of course, as you know, act as a catalyst to rapidly biodegrade. That's what it does.

And then whenever we have actinose or bacterial issues or viral issues, then we use an EPA registered botanical product to go in and treat those as well.

Very interesting. And that botanical has a residue that's long-killing or is it contact? Yeah, it's going to be a contact, a certain amount of exposure.

Are you talking about the bacterial treatments or sanitizations as we call them in the industry? Yeah. So we're going to apply that product and it does have a efficacy or kill ratio after so many seconds on a surface, just like you would with any sort of biocide.

But even with that, we're not going to use something that is caustic. Again, because a lot of our clients are going to be chemically sensitive. Do these treatments require professionals to do it, or can some people do this as a self-treatment with training?

You know, if you go to the EPA's website, if it's a small enough mold problem, and typically they define that as a less than 10 square feet of affected area, Oftentimes some of these treatments can be performed by the homeowner or the patient themselves.

Other times, especially when you have someone that's hypersensitive to exposures, that sort of thing may not be something that they want to tackle. We do offer some consultation services as well.

If someone wants to go down that path, we have resources to be able to help them on our website and they can contact us and actually have a consultation with an indoor environmental professional as well.

Tell me how many locations do you have?

Treating Contents, Vehicles, and Workspaces

We have eight locations. All of our offices are regional. So we have, we cover, we have offices in the state of Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Missouri, Texas, Denver, Arizona, and Oregon that services the Pacific Northwest.

So the, usually the remediation process, maybe tell us maybe the amount of time is, is, you know, it's probably, it depends on the location, the contamination, but just kind of an average for budgeting.

How much time is involved? That's an easy question. It can depend upon, obviously, the scope. So do we have a situation where it's strictly surface molds and we have to do a fine particulate treatment?

That may take a day or two. We get into some projects that maybe there's been water damage and drywall or building materials that are affected that need to come out.

And so that's going to be obviously a little bit longer. Generally, most of our projects are going to be two to three days, at which time the homeowner is out of the home while we're working on it.

Like we don't want them exposed, but most of them get done within that timeframe. Well, you know, we tell our patients, you know, we're a mold friendly pharmacy and we have patients, we deal with the pharmaceuticals and their recovery.

And we tell the first thing, you know, you've got to get out of the home and get away from that exposure. And a lot of people. take temporary residences for a month until they can get their complete remediation and they feel safe to go back in.

So they have to get out of that molding environments. But sometimes you'd be surprised, people just won't do it. But hopefully it sounds like your solution is not going to bankrupt people, right?

We certainly don't want that to be the case. We understand that journey of environmental illness, it's not just the mold. We always say it's the ripples in the water, right?

I like that. And the ripples are always bigger than the pebble that hits it, right? The mold is the pebble and then you have all the supplements that you take.

You have all the medical expenses and then you have the expense of repairing the house and all these can become pretty, pretty large. We understand what it takes in order for us to run the business, take care of our employees without gouging our clients.

We operate at the margins that we need to stay in business and be successful. You know, we do $500 projects. We do projects that cost $30,000. It just depends on the scope of work that needs to be done.

It's really about right sizing the remediation to solve the problem. Now, we've asked the question all the time to some people. I don't know of any insurance companies that have allowed any coverage for mold remediation in their policies anymore.

They used to be, but I think some years ago they've made a lot of changes. Have you seen any type of reimbursement from any of these services? We have.

So it really depends upon, one, the state that you're in, because insurance is regulated on a state level. For example, I'm in Florida, and Florida has mandatory coverage on all homeowners insurance policies.

So there is a certain amount of coverage there. But then it can also be What's the event that caused the mold

problem? So is it a maintenance issue that the homeowner should have taken care of and didn't?

Well, that may be a little challenging to get it taken care of, or was it a storm or a burst pipe? That may be something different. Or structural, you know, yeah, I can see that.

Yeah. if it's a covered event underneath the policy. And then sometimes you can break that down further. Like if it's a burst pipe, there's a certain amount of water damage that's covered.

And then you have the mold side of that. So a portion may or may not be covered. It just really depends on your policy. And the homeowner can, Ray, actually go back and get a supplement to their policy oftentimes to cover mold as well.

I had a patient tell us that they lived in Florida and they survived the hurricane and their insurance company said they denied the coverage for the complete destruction of the house.

They said that wind was not covered under their policy. But I don't know of any hurricane that doesn't have wind because of the water damage. That's kind of by definition, it would seem.

You would think so, right? How about a tornado? Anyway, that's good that you've got solutions, you work with homeowners, you interview them and see if they have given them hope.

It sounds like many times the finishings, the finish outs, the carpets, the drapes, the upholstery, all that has those mold spores on it. It sounds like your treatment can, I don't know of anything else that can actually treat some of those furnishings, carpets and things like that.

Yeah, it's not just a matter of the mold on the structure because obviously all those items get exposed as well and so we use an advanced type of filtration when we go back and treat carpets.

Molds need a complex carbon compound as a food source and most of our carpets today is going to be polyester or olefin or nylon. And so it may not be a good food source for mold, but carpet can be a pretty good repository for mold.

We have a process for treating that as well. But cars, cars have, they have a tremendous incubator for mold in their HVAC systems.

Insurance, Costs, and Moisture Control

We tell people that change that cabin filter, but once that car gets a mess, You got to fix it. You know, it's funny you bring that up because that's not something that a lot of people think about, but we actually do environmental mycotoxin testing and the amount of cars that we've tested for mycotoxins.

Off the top of my head, I can think of a client that lived in Chicago that worked downtown. So he's in his car an hour and an hour and a half each way getting from the suburbs to downtown Chicago.

And his car tested positive for, I think it was aflatoxins or ochratoxins, I can't remember. So he's enclosed in this small environment getting exposed every day, twice a day.

And so we do a fair amount of vehicle treatments. Wow. It's ongoing. And then also most of the statistics are the amount of mold exposure and water damages to commercial buildings.

is 50% schools as well, if you look at the statistics. So people going to work, they can't remediate their work area in the work environment. How do you handle that?

That can be a little tricky, and we've worked with school systems in the past. Occasionally, we've had some success, or better yet, our clients have had some success in going to their HR department saying, hey, I feel

exposed.

I'm not feeling well. Here's my medical testing we've had done. We'd like to test the environment to see if that's where it's coming from. And there has been some success in doing that.

And so we always encourage anyone that if, you know, test where you spend the most time first. And then if, and then it's kind of orders of magnitude or or low-hanging fruit.

So you test your home, and if that tests out fine, then maybe you go back, you test your vehicle, or maybe you go back and test your workspace and go there to really, again, make a data-driven decision on where your exposure could be coming from.

Right. You know, you're giving people great solutions to a problem that, you know, their homes are an investment, you know, and maintenance is so critical, and lighting these things are preventable.

One thing I hope people learn today is that just to be aware, Right? Be aware that it is out there and as to just ignoring it and get the facts. Can you, as we wrap up here and we want to be able to post, we'll post this on our website, pdlabsrx.com and also be under our podcast section, Healthy Choices.

Can you give us your website information? Because we're people to learn. Absolutely. It's real simple. It's www.themoldpros.com. It's plural, mold pros.

And there's some great resources there. We have, if you go to the resources tab, they'll find an e-magazine which talks about some tips on how to prevent mold.

Here's what you do to make sure you don't talk with us. But then also there is a final inspector side. You want to click on their geographical area. That will direct them to talk to Mopro's employee that can walk them through their process.

We're happy to review labs that they've done, so on and so forth. What are we going to do to help them on their journey? So there's a lot of resources on that website.

You know, I went to a number of, a couple of lectures that talked at different building materials. I would listen to one lecture and give me your opinion, but it said that sheet rocks is probably the worst fender in.

retaining moisture and just like wicking moisture and proliferating. It's this brigade breeding ground. And many of the cheap sheetrock is coming in and sometimes it's even embedded with mold before it even gets into a building.

You know, the sheetrock is everywhere. It's in every new building. Is there any different types of building materials, you know, for people that are just, you know, are starting out right now?

Should they choose certain building materials that are mold resistant? Yeah, there, there actually is mold resistant sheetrock as well. That it doesn't really cost that much more.

It normally comes in a four by eight sheet. You can get it different sizes, but it's a couple of dollars more. So the overall costs, uh, isn't that much more, but I would actually back up, you know, our approach is always moisture mold and mycotoxins.

So if you, and I live in Florida and the South, it's always humid. And so. The house had drywall on it whenever I bought it, so it's not like I can take it down.

If you manage the moisture, that's really the key.

Resources and Closing Remarks

Regardless, if we don't have that moisture problem, whether that's a leak or high humidity, oftentimes is the case for like aspergillus or penicillium types of molds, manage that relative humidity between 30 and 50% ideally.

Regardless whether you have sheetrock or laid in plaster or whatever, you shouldn't have a problem. Comes down to HVAC, right? A lot of it does. Yeah, it's a bigger issue than a lot of people think.

But it's very expensive to get HVAC, get a moisture humidity reduction HVAC system. It's especially commercial. It's very expensive. Yeah. A whole house dehumidifier is not inexpensive, but we've been able, there's some other.

Workarounds are some things that you can do with smart thermostats or even portable dehumidification systems that can just supplement what your HVAC does.

There are some things to do that doesn't necessarily have to break the bank. That's right. We've done that. Well, this has been great. Give out your website one more time.

for our listeners and maybe just how to contact you because it sounded like you had a great approach and you take care of people. Maybe you can give out your contact information for our listeners again.

Yeah, happy to. So the website is themoldpros.com. That's T-H-E-M-O-L-D-P-R-O-S.com. If you'd like to email us, email us at info, I-N-F-O at themoldpros.com.

And then we have regional offices that have numbers listed on our website. There's a contact us form on the website as well. that you can reach out to.

Our headquarters, the phone number is 239-262-6653. And we can direct you to the nearest office about that way as well. Well, John, this has been incredibly valuable.

Thanks for shining a light on this issue. It's so often misunderstood. And for our listeners that want to learn more about evaluating their home or their business, you can follow John's educational work.

and connect with, like you said, the qualified environmental professionals that specialize in building science approach to mold investigations. If you'd like to hear more episodes on functional medicine, environmental health or strategies, to support your well-being, make sure you subscribe to Healthy Choices wherever you get your podcast.

And again, I'm Ray Salano. Thanks for listening. And John, we've got to get you back on again. And we want to definitely have a link to our website, pdlabsrx.com.

You'll be able to give people a solution, you know, We'll sell the pharmaceuticals, but you can help get people get their houses in order because otherwise it's just going to continue on and on.

Happy to be back any time you'll have me. Okay. John, thanks again. You're listening to Healthy Choices. Thank you. Thank you for listening to Healthy Choices podcast on Dr.

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