The 5 Things Every Homeowner Must Do to Prevent Mold Transcript

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Intro and Mold Prevention Overview

Molds cannot grow without moisture. It's just that simple. And the EPA recommends keeping indoor relative humidity between 30 and 50% ideally to avoid that mold growth.

And why does that matter so much? When humidity levels become elevated, you're creating the perfect environment for mold spores, which are always present in the air, to colonize and grow on surfaces.

In the right conditions, you can get mold growth within about 24 to 48 hours. You've tried everything. You've changed your diet. You've detoxed. You've 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 if it's your environment? Welcome to Mold Microtoxins and More.

I'm John Bode. Each week, I sit down with experts uncovering how mold, microtoxins, and environmental exposures affect your health and what real recovery looks like.

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Welcome back to Mold Microtoxins and More. I'm your host, John Bodie, co-founder of The Mold Pros. Today's episode is going to be a little bit different.

Instead of sitting down with a healthcare provider or another environmental health expert, I want to go solo to share what I've learned from years in the field about preventing mold problems before they start.

Most people only think about mold after they've already had a problem. But the homeowners that never need our services, these are the ones that are doing these five things consistently.

So whether you're a current homeowner or you're thinking about buying a property, or you just want to protect your family's health, these are practical, actionable steps that can save you thousands of dollars and potentially serious health issues on down the road.

So I want to count these down from number five to number one, saving the most critical prevention strategy for last. So let's dive in. Coming in at number five is using mold-resistant building materials and practices, especially during renovations or new construction.

Mold-Resistant Materials and Renovation Practices

So if you're building or renovating, specify mold-resistant materials wherever possible. In bathrooms, laundry rooms, and basements, use mold-resistant drywall.

Greenboard, or even better, go paperless drywall. Regular drywall has a paper facing that's essentially mold food when it gets wet and mold resistant alternatives use fiberglass facing or completely paperless.

You should also look into mold resistant paints. We recommend finding ones that are low VOC. And for insulation in damp environments like basements or crawl spaces, avoid paper-faced insulation like fiberglass bats.

Consider using closed cell spray foam or rigid foam board, or even unfaced fiberglass bats instead. And when it comes to flooring, choose wisely. especially in basements or bathrooms, ceramic tile or luxury vinyl plank, or even silt concrete.

Those are way better choices than carpet. And some of today's luxury vinyl, it just looks great. It's really easy to install and it's not that expensive.

So it's a really good DIY project. And here's something that most people don't even think about. How you store your items in your home, it really does matter.

So don't push furniture against exterior walls, especially in basements. Always leave a few inches for air circulation. And when it comes to storage, we recommend that you use those polytotes or plastic storage bins instead of cardboard boxes.

The cardboard is an organic material that readily supports mold growth when it becomes damp and it will absorb moisture. So another good tool or tip whenever you're storing is elevate your storage off the basement floors with shelving.

And for crawl spaces, consider encapsulation with a vapor barrier on the floor and up the walls and make sure that you have sealed vents and a dehumidifier.

This can completely transform a moisture problem into a controlled environment. Stack effect can pull up damp or moldy air from a basement or crawlspace into the main living area.

And so it's important to keep those areas really dry and well ventilated. And finally, when you're doing any renovation work, make absolutely certain that everything is properly dried before closing up the walls.

We've inspected countless homes where contractors have closed up everything, rebuilt the wall before everything was fully dried out. And that just creates the perfect conditions for hidden mold growth.

Number two on our, on our countdown list is going to be maintaining gutters and ensuring proper drainage around the home's foundation. This is kind of one of those out of sight, out of mind issues that causes some of the worst bowl problems that we see.

Your gutters exist for one reason, and that's to direct water away from your home's foundation. And when they're clogged or damaged or we have water that will then overflow and pull around the foundation, and that can see right

into the basement or right into the crawl space, and it saturates the soil all around your foundation, and that can lead to those significant moisture intrusions.

We forget that concrete is porous and it will absorb water. So here's your action plan. Clean your gutters at least twice a year, you know, late spring or late fall perhaps, or if you have a lot of overhanging trees or in a heavily wooded area, you may need to do it more frequently than that.

And while you're up there, check for the proper slope towards downspouts, make sure the water is being directed that way and look for sections that are either pulling away from the fascia or have holes or cracks that can sometimes appear.

But cleaning your gutters, that's only the first step. Your downspouts is the second part of that equation. And we recommend that those be extended five to six feet away from the foundation.

You know, those plastic extensions that you can get at Lowe's or Home Depot or your hardware stores, those things work, so use them. The goal is to deposit the water far enough away from the foundation so it doesn't flow backwards into the home and create those issues.

And speaking of foundations, check the grading around your home. The soil should slope away from the house. Ideally, you want about six inches of drop over a 10-foot run.

And if the water is pulling near your foundation, you need to regrade those areas or install drainage solutions. And if you have some of these chronic moisture issues or some negative slope that you can't really fix otherwise, you may need to look at a French drain or other drainage system around the home to pull that water away.

Yes, it's an investment, but it's much less expensive than dealing with an ongoing mold problem, which can create foundation damage and, of course, potential health issues.

And one more thing, if you have window wells, like in a basement, make sure you have the proper drainage covers. Water wells that fill up with water are common entry point moisture for a basement.

We've seen major mold problems start right there.

Gutters, Drainage, and Foundation Moisture Control

Number three, ensure proper ventilation throughout your home. Poor ventilation is a common contributor to mold growth that we see, and it's completely preventable.

Think about areas in your home that tend to generate a lot of moisture, like bathrooms or kitchens or laundry rooms. These areas absolutely need proper ventilation to the outside of the home, not just into an attic or to another room, but actually outside of the house.

Every bathroom should have an exhaust fan that's vented to the exterior. And make sure that you're running it during showers and for about 20 or 30 minutes after the shower as well.

And you want to make sure that it's functioning properly. So here's a quick test that you can do at home. Hold up a tissue to the exhaust fan while it's running.

And if it doesn't stick to the vent, your fan is not pulling enough air through. So that means it may simply need some cleaning. You can drop the cover and clean that out really well.

It could be that perhaps your ducts are blocked or it could be that the fan just needs to be replaced. And in the kitchen, use your range hood every time you cook, especially if you're boiling water or cooking anything that generates a lot of steam.

And again, make sure it's vented to the outside and not just recirculating that air in the home. For basements and crawl space, ventilation is absolutely critical.

Basements often need supplemental ventilation through windows or vents, especially if there's not really good climate controls down there. And crawl spaces, as we mentioned before, they should be properly ventilated to building codes.

And we recommend encapsulation depending upon the climate. And don't forget your attic. Proper ventilation through soffit vents or ridge vents or gable vents, that prevents moisture buildup that can lead to roof deck mold and structural damage.

A well-ventilated attic should be close to the outdoor temperature. It shouldn't be super hot or a lot more warm than what's compared to the outside. One thing that oftentimes happens in attics, especially if they have blown in insulation, is that they'll fail to put the baffles where the soffit vents are, and they'll blow that insulation in, and they'll cover up the vents.

So getting in there with a small leaf rake, you can pull some of that back and increase some of that ventilation. And here's one thing that people sometimes really just overlook is don't block your HVAC return vents with furniture.

Your HVAC system is a major part of your home's ventilation strategy and it needs to circulate that air properly throughout the home to make sure that you have proper moisture management.

You've cleaned, repainted, and 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.

It's more than just a cleanup. It's a science-based system designed to help your body heal by healing the environment first.

Ventilation Throughout the Home

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. Point number two, fix water leaks immediately. I can't stress this enough. Mold can begin growing within 24 to 48 hours of water exposure.

And that's not theoretical. That is real-world timing. In my years of doing mold inspections, I've seen big problems that started out with what seemed to be really minor water leaks.

It can be a slow drip underneath the kitchen sink that we'd been meaning to fix and didn't, or a toilet seal that just slightly compromised, or maybe even a tiny roof leak in the attic that only shows up during rainy season.

Well, these small leaks can cause massive problems because they provide consistent moisture over time and oftentimes in a hidden area. So have it in a regular inspection routine.

So check underneath your sinks, check around your toilets, check near your hot water heater, around your windows and in your attic, especially after storms in the attic.

And look for water stains, discoloration, peeling paint, bubbling, warping. These are all signs that water could be getting in places where it shouldn't be.

You can also check your water bill. If it's unusually high without a good explanation, you may have a hidden water leak. Now, some water companies will offer a leak detection service, but if they don't, you may be able to do this yourself by turning off all the water using appliances and then go out and check your water meter.

If it's still moving and none of those appliances are running, you may have a leak somewhere. And if you do find a leak in your home, don't put a bucket under it and add it to fix a leak to your to-do list.

Address it as soon as possible. If it's a small fix and you can take care of it yourself, easily done. But if it's beyond your skill level or if you don't have time, just call a plumber immediately.

The cost of that plumber's visit is nothing compared to a mold remediation and certainly the potential health impacts to your family. So get it taken care of straight away.

And here's something that some people don't think about. If you've had an active water leak for more than 48 hours, if the material got really saturated, we recommend that you have a professional mold inspection even after fixing the leak.

Just because you can't see visible mold growth doesn't mean it's not there. It could be hiding underneath a wall, it could be under the flooring, etc.

And some of these hidden molds can be the most dangerous because they go unaddressed for so long. So get it tested. It doesn't hurt. Filant number one, and that is controlling indoor humidity.

And I'm putting this at the top of the list because it's absolutely foundational. Molds cannot grow without moisture. It's just that simple. And the EPA recommends keeping indoor relative humidity between 30 and 50% ideally to avoid that mold growth.

And why does that matter so much? When humidity levels become elevated, you're creating the perfect environment for mold spores, which are always present in the air, to colonize and grow on surfaces.

And it can happen pretty fast, as we talked about. In the right conditions, you can get mold growth within about 24 to 48 hours. So how do you control humidity?

Well, first, we recommend that you invest in a really good hygrometer. A hygrometer is a device that measures humidity levels.

Fix Water Leaks Immediately

So you can pick one up for about $10 or $20 at any hardware store, or you can buy them online pretty easily, and place them in different areas of your home, especially if you have a basement or in your bathrooms or laundry rooms and that sort of thing, and check it regularly, especially during humid seasons.

I use Apple's HomePods, so not only can I listen to great music throughout the house, but these HomePods have temperature and little hygrometers in there, so it tells me what the temp and relative humidity is all throughout my house.

I just pull up on my iPhone, boom, and I know. If you're consistently reading above 50%, here's your action plan. Run dehumidifiers in problem areas, especially in basements and crawl spaces.

Damp air is heavier and it drops, and so those are the first places that you want to make sure you get dried out. In humid climates like I have here in Florida, a dehumidifier may run quite a bit, especially during rainy season or in a basement, it may run all the time.

We recommend that you get one that has a pump and a drain hose so you're not doing that bucket brigade all the time trying to empty it out. Another issue is make sure that your HVAC system is properly sized for your home.

Here's a mistake that we see all the time is there's an oversized AC unit that will cool your home way too quickly without removing enough of the humidity.

Your AC should run long enough to dehumidify the home, not just cool it down. So here's a game changer. Here's your pro tip, and it's a great takeaway.

Every homeowner should know about this. Install a smart thermostat with the humidity control feature. Modern smart thermostats like a Nest or a Honeywell home model, they don't just control the temperature, they actually monitor and manage humidity levels throughout your home.

And here's how they work. Many smart thermostats have a built-in humidity sensor that can be programmed to maintain specific humidity targets, like we talked about, between 30 and 50 percent.

When that humidity gets too high, they can run your air conditioning in a dehumidification mode, allowing the fan to run at lower speeds to maximize that moisture removal.

Some models can even integrate like a whole house dehumidifier or signal your HVAC system to run longer cycles, specifically for humidity control. I have that set up in my Linux system for my home.

It does a great job. And the beauty of a smart thermostat is that it gives real-time data. So you can check your home's humidity from your smartphone.

You can get alerts if your levels are too high. And some of those apps will allow you to see historical trends to identify your problem periods. So for someone that's serious about mold prevention, this kind of monitoring is simply invaluable.

And you can literally see when your bathroom humidity spikes after a shower or when your basement humidity creeps up during, you know, rainy season or during humid weather.

Control Indoor Humidity

So if you're going to invest in a smart thermostat for humidity control, make sure it has a couple of these features. One, you want a built in humidity sensor.

You want the building to set those humidity targets. make sure it has a dehumidification mode. And I really like that smartphone alert feature as well.

going to cost you probably two to three hundred dollars some utility companies will offer rebates if you upgrade to one of those but that one-time cost gives you continuous protection and it's uh it's it's really invaluable so beyond the technology don't forget just the basics right it's using those exhaust fans in the bathrooms in the kitchens religiously And make sure you run them 20 or 30 minutes after showering or cooking.

And during human months, use your air conditioning system that's already there in your home. Use that as your kind of whole house dehumidifier. You know, you can remove that moisture as it's cooling the air.

And one tip I always share with homeowners is the condensation forming on the windows. If you see that, that's a red flag that your indoor relative humidity may be too high.

That moisture has to go somewhere. And oftentimes it's going in the walls, it's going in the windowsills, et cetera, or flooring where you can't see it.

So that window condensation is your early warning system. In Florida, where I work, we're in one of the most

human climates in the country. And I can't tell you how many homes I inspect where humidity has been like 65%, 70 or 75% indoors.

And with these levels, you're not preventing mold. You're just waiting for it to appear. And when it does, you get spotting all throughout the structure on the walls, the personal items.

It gets everywhere. It's a xerophilic mold bloom. And it's a big problem. Probably the vast majority of the work that we do is associated with this type of situation.

And I put humidity as the number one thing because it connects everything back to that moisture control, right? Fixing leaks, insurer ventilation, maintaining drainage, using resistant milling materials.

We all work together to keep those moisture levels where they need to be. But if you had to focus on just one thing, controlling your indoor humidity would give the biggest return on investment for mold prevention.

It's the foundation that everything else is built on. So there you have it, the top five things a homeowner can do to avoid mold problems, counting down from number five to number one.

So just to kind of recap, number five, use mold resistant building materials and practices during renovations. Number four, maintain gutters and proper drainage around your foundations.

And the third item is to ensure proper ventilation in bathrooms, kitchens, and throughout your home. Number two, fix water leaks immediately. Don't wait.

Remember, you've got that critical 24 to 48 hour window. And the number one thing, maintain or control your indoor relative humidity between 30 and 50% as the EPA recommends.

None of these steps are particularly complicated or expensive when you're being proactive, but ignoring them can lead to serious problems. And I've seen families dealing with chronic health issues that have resolved once they've addressed the mold issue in their homes.

And I've seen homeowners face remediation bills of 10,000, 15,000, or even as high as 30,000 on projects because of small problems that they ignored that became major issues.

So the best mold problem is the one that you never have. And these five practices will get you about 90% of the way there. So if you're listening to this and you're thinking, well, I may already have a mold problem, don't panic, but also don't wait.

If you're experiencing unexplained health symptoms or if you see visible mold or what you believe to be mold, or if you smell that damp, musty odor, or if you've had a water intrusion event, we recommend that you get a professional mold inspection.

At The Mold Pros, we work with health care providers across the country who understand the health impacts of mold exposure, and we can help you figure out exactly what's going on in your home.

And if you're a healthcare provider treating patients with environmental illness, we'd love to connect you with our preferred provider network. So thanks for listening to this episode of Mold Microtoxins and More.

If you found it to be helpful, please share it with friends and family. Preventive information like this can make a real difference in people's lives.

And remember to follow us on whichever platform you listen to your podcast and give us a great review. Till next time, stay dry, stay healthy. 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.