Unseen Threats: Understanding Mold's Impact On Children's Health Transcript

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Introduction to Mold and Mycotoxins

Welcome back to ADHD, Autism and Chronic Disease Parenting Summit. I'm here with doctor Lauren Tessier from the founder of Life After Mold. Thank you so much for being here.

I'm excited to chat about mold. It's a big, interesting topic and I get a lot of questions about In the Office. Yeah, I'm really excited to be here. It's such a, overlooked thing in kiddos, aside from, you know, the whole asthma thing, that's usually where it gets the most, crowd out there.

So I'm really excited to be here and share some good information for parents. Definitely. So I would say, you know, in my office where I see this question pop up the most, is somebody has some sort of health concern, right?

Whatever it is. And then for whatever reason, either they find it we're doing construction or somebody mentions they should look for mold or they find mold.

Whatever reason, they find some mold in their house, and now they're worried that that's the reason they're having health issues or contributing to it.

So maybe we can start pretty basically by talking about what is mold and what kinds of mold, or when you should be worried about it if you if you do find it because, you know, I know like I talk about like molds everywhere, right.

So it's not necessarily bad, but it can be bad for some people. So maybe we can just start there and talk about what it is and when you should be worried about it.

Yeah, sure. So, there's a molds in general. They are the, the living organisms. They are very much, in the mind's eye, similar to the concept of bacteria.

Kind of single celled little living things, but in a totally different realm of, of cells and life forms than bacteria. And there's lots of different organizations and classifications for mold.

But really, what I like people to really take away from it is, molds can be like single cellular like yeasts, like the things that we use to, to cook even our Candida infections or diaper rash infections or ringworm infections.

Or they can be what we call multicellular. So they really need to exist as a group in order to function. And those are typically what we think of as the indoor molds, that are problematic.

So, yeah, the, the, the molds are the organisms. And then what people are also find in this realm is the concept of mycotoxins. And so mycotoxins might go meaning fungi and toxin meaning toxin.

They are a, creation of the molds. It's just by their nature. We think it's really for the molds defense. So when they're existing in an environment, they'll kind of like, send out their mycotoxins to, make challenges for other organisms around them so they can thrive and they can really get a foot in.

And so, these defensive tactics, work great for them, to secure their niche in the soil and, you know, anywhere else that mold grows.

How Mold Exposure Affects Kids

But by the same. Right, they also do a really amazing job of, damaging ourselves. And so, molds are the living thing, and the mycotoxins are what they produce, which caused a good amount of what we call mold related illness.

And folks. Them. And at least the way that I've always thought about it and from what I've seen, it's, you know, mold is everywhere, right? It's not bad or good, just like you know, I feel like we, you know, label like bacteria as bad, even though, you know, now we're starting to have a better understanding.

And I think people are starting to get the bacteria is not bad. Some bacteria in the wrong place in the wrong situation is bad for it. But mostly it's good.

And I feel like, you know, mold is is something similar where it's everywhere. Right. And it's not necessarily bad for you, but in certain situations and certain locations with a certain genetic set up or makeup or whatever it may be, then it might be bad for you.

Obviously, some could be bad for everybody, but but most is not going to be the case. And just because you find mold doesn't mean you're having issues from it.

But but what? What would it look like if you, if you are having issues or if you if if you do define mold, what would you think of like, oh, this could be related to what's going on with my kids.

So I think to to pan back, I agree with you about the idea of mold is everywhere, but there is a very big difference between mold, right? Existing outside where the volume of air is always moving and shifting.

So there's almost like an infinite volume, an infinite, space in which a certain amount of mold and mold fragments and mold spores can exist. But in the indoor environment, those air exchanges occur a lot less, and we have a lot more of a fixed volume that these spores can just.

And spore fragments can, can go out into the air into. So, a will folks, you know, find a little bit of mold spores and mold fragments and any, dust in their home.

Absolutely. We've found molds on the space station, you know, like, this is. But the difference here is I'm talking more spores in fragments rather than large growth colonies.

And those are two different things. I really want people to wrap their head around. So yes, molds exist everywhere. And it's not the 1 or 2 spores that are going to, you know, make people incredibly sick.

It's going to be either an increased sensitivity or a very high concentration, or the combination of the two. So to to circle back to your question about, like, you know, if it's in the environment, when should we start to be concerned what some of the symptoms might look like?

I think maybe, how about we start with, what some of the symptoms might look like is a reasonable place or, so in kids, especially because this is what we're focusing on, the presentation of mold in kids is really wild.

It's really wild. Meaning it's, what I can see is very different from adults. You know, typically any time a kid comes home and they're complaining about, fatigue or headache or these things that you wouldn't expect a child to complain about, those are always big red flags for me.

As are, you know, fatigue in adults. And, you know, with adults, we see brain fog, fatigue, joint pain, you know, hormonal issues, all these different things.

But in kiddos, it's a little bit more of a, a difficult to pin down the first like complicating factors. Kids don't have the best, like, internal tracking and then ability to verbalize to the exterior.

So, you know, a kid might be feeling just like crummy one day, but they can't tell you that they're having, like, deep seated bone pain. You know, they can't, you know, their tummy feels icky, but they can't tell you that.

Like, it's the lower, like, left hand corner and it's like throbbing or things like that. So, in kids, what we typically find is that, there's usually, increased GI disturbances, headaches, increased respiratory infections, fatigue, brain fog,

vision changes at school, difficulties like seeing the board, trouble seeing the boards.

And, you know, the list goes on and on. But it's usually the things that parents can noticeably track, which is usually my kid feels kind of listless.

They're getting head colds a lot, and they seem to have tummy troubles. And those are typically the widely reported ones for kids.

Where Mold Hides in Homes and Schools

Yeah, I agree, and again, going back to like what what I see in the practice is something that people do ask about a lot. It's it's it's not easy to figure this out if it's like acute, right.

You know, you're not going to think about it when your kid has a headache for the first day. Right. And there's there's no reason that you necessarily should at first.

But I think that right, usually where this comes in and where people start thinking about there's those chronic conditions where, you know, they're they're just not getting better.

They're sick all the time. It should be on the differential. And it is now for me, you know, over the years where it's just one of the things where, you know, if you're thinking about like the thyroid and chronic this and chronic that, then you should be thinking about mold as one of the things that, that that could be a potential for, for those those symptoms.

Yeah. It's not it's not easy. I don't think there is any like obvious you know. Oh we have this symptom in there. First name my mole. It doesn't it doesn't really work like that.

And I think what's also harder is the other piece that you mentioned, which is it's the you need enough of it, but you also need the susceptibility. So you can have a household with five people and only one is having symptoms from it.

Or maybe, you know, one is having more outwardly symptoms and the other people are just like. Right. There's the kicker. There's totally the kicker, because I'll have parents come in and mom will be like, I have headache and dizziness and brain fog, and and you'll turn to dad and you'll be like, well, what's going on for you?

And he is used to being the, the muscle, the mover in the house, the like making things happen. And that's where he registers and focuses and his body and that's that's not where it's happening for him, potentially for mom.

She's always on. She's always multitasking. And or most, you know, family dynamics are different. But in that case, I usually find that the brain fog is the big noticeable thing for mom.

Whereas, you know, dads kind of underreport or they're not tracking as well until you find out that dad has ADHD and he recently had to go up on his medication because it has been a huge effect.

And what I usually find in the kiddos is that, you know, the, the 2.5 children in a household that's, you know, days gone by. But we usually see one kid that would almost mimic mom a little bit more, and one kid that would almost mimic dad a little bit more.

And so, you might have a male child, who has really good detox genetics, who's able to move this stuff through, and he presents a little bit more as a dad.

Or you might have, mom, the daughter who has a little bit more like, allergenic reactions and she has more histamine reactions, and she tends to be someone who generates a lot of histamine as it is.

So, you know, when we're really trying to wrap our head around, mold exposure, we also need to take into

consideration like what type of I would say mold illness are we dealing with?

Is it a toxic reaction? Is it the the widely understood allergic reaction? Is it like a colonization or an infection? Or is it more this kind of chronic inflammation?

The problem is with all those four they can overlap. And so you could have like a colonization or a low level infection that's also causing a toxic reaction and so causing an allergic reaction.

So the important thing is really like sitting down, with a family and trying to really suss out all the different symptoms of what could be going on. And, you know, even becomes a lot harder for, parents of like, infants and babies, especially when you ship them off to daycare and you don't get to see their intricacies of their day in and day out, and they come home tired and nappy, and that's the end of the day.

So it's, it's amazing how the different family members can really present differently, and then also how the way we go about our life can really impact our understanding and interpretation of those symptoms.

Gets really hard. Definitely. And so that might be piquing some people who are listening to like, oh, you know, this is some of this stuff is going on.

This sounds like my family. Some now. Okay, so what do I do about it? And, you know, there's a few things I don't, you know, we can talk about, but different, different ways, like, you know, certainly you can hire a company to come in your home and, and look and I think that's probably going to be the best way to, to look or at least the most thorough, you can do blood testing, right?

They don't look in your blood. But before people get there, if they don't want to go to the step, of hiring a company yet, are there some places that you feel like, you know, maybe people can look on their own and see if they're like, oh, maybe look behind this or under this or in here and just see if they could find it themselves.

Yeah. You know, I think, visual inspection and having a concept of your family is like, home is a really good just baseline because then if you know what things look like and they have a change, then you can, you can, track that well, and I'll mention a follow up to that in a second.

But it's not necessarily just the home. I want to call out the fact that 5% of my population are teachers, and teachers, I believe, make up like 0.0 something percent of the US population.

And forever. One teacher you have anywhere, you know, depending on the class from like 16 upward to the mid 30s of students in the classroom. And so it's amazing.

It's amazing how often I see schools as a, this gets me really upset to, as a source of exposure. And teachers are often very much, brushed off even when they try to speak up because they know it's not just for them, it's also for the children.

And, yeah. So it's very frustrating to see. So schools can definitely be a huge exposure. Churches, camps, cars. Think about step family homes, grandparents homes, any time where kids spend a good amount, of time.

And, you know, that can be as simple to as a bed that, you know, someone got hand-me-down from someone else and it happened to be a moldy mattress, and the child's spending eight hours a night on it, you know, and the rest of the home could be fine.

But their their face and their lungs and their offices are in close contact with that mattress. So, you know, before people really go and pull the house apart, you know, looking for the, the smoking gun, I encourage people to step back and pay attention to, periodicity.

Finding the Right Inspector and Next Steps

So timing what happens on Monday when I drop my kid off from school and I pick them up? What happens on Friday when I pick them up and we move into our weekend?

How are they on Saturday morning? What does that look like? Are they feeling really crummy Saturday morning as we move into a vacation and then they start to do better.

And then I pick them up from school that next Monday and they're like, crumble them again all over again. Even summer vacations. And one thing I also wanted to kind of back up to earlier about symptoms is that behavioral and, inattentive and even autism spectrum disorders are wildly exacerbated by mold exposure.

Mycotoxins, the toxins from molds have the ability to cross a blood brain barrier where they can, cause localized inflammation. They can shift all those neurochemicals up there.

And there are plenty of studies that show, exacerbation of autism symptoms with kids who are, dampness, exposed water damage, exposed, inattention, ADHD, increased diagnosis of oppositional, oppositional defiance or and so, you know, paying attention to that when school ends for your kid and they're home from the summer.

Gee like they don't need their ADHD menses. So I know, like in the small things that I really encourage people to track, and pay attention to. And you might not always shift and see those changes, because sometimes, and this is a huge complicating factor.

I'm sorry everybody. The molds can exist in the environment. Simplest thing molds can also exist in our sinuses and in our gut, which can also be a source of those toxins.

And so that's why it's really important for us to try to figure out if there's timing of the environment and what you can do to improve it. And then you can move on to what's happening internally.

So, before you turn the house part, before you just kind of pay attention to paragraphs, track and map. And then after that, I think, it'll give you a little bit of a smoking gun of where to look next.

So I'm going to let you interrupt me and ask any questions before I keep rambling on. Yeah. No, I think that's very, very, very helpful. I think it's a very good point to mention that it might not just be in your home, it could be anywhere.

I think people don't always think that way. And I think that's difficult because it could be anywhere. And I think that's why there are owners out there that work on mold, because, you know, sometimes you need help to kind of think these things through.

And that's where, you know, great practitioners like yourself, and other people are it can be really helpful to, you know, kind of think through these things because you you may not I'm curious from, from your experience, you know, again, yes, I think it's great to think about school and all these things, but let's say you are looking in your home because that's what you have access to.

If you're a parent, you might not have access to a school. What what are, you know, maybe the three top places where, you know, or whatever. It doesn't be three, but like the couple of top places where, you know, maybe these are like the first places I would say to look, because this is the most common that I find in my practice of like, you know, it's a metal roof or it's in the I mean, I've heard things like, you have to look in your washing machine and dishwasher in those places because it can hide there, you know, obviously anywhere where there's a leak.

Yeah. No roof. So what are the things that you found when people have done the testing that are like the most common, you know, 2 or 3 places. Yeah. Let's say the most common.

And then let's do like the, surprisingly well hidden but common. Most common are going to be, basements, very much basements that have any standing water, increased humidity and finished basements are like an absolute no go.

It's that it is almost impossible to keep a finished basement dry enough. At 35% to prevent any type of mold growth. So basements, attics. And then I would say, under like, typing.

So sinks, dishwashers, any type of like water drainage issue is usually the three biggest culprits. Okay. And then. And there's a lot of variance that's.

The hidden ones. Yeah. So the hidden ones, wobbly toilets, wobbly toilets can definitely be a big issue that goes, overseen. The dishwashing filter, as you mentioned.

And then how you end up drinking your water or eating your ice. So countertop gravity fed filters are notorious for being moldy, fridge water lines that feed into the ice systems and feed into the water lines are notoriously moldy.

So, yeah, I think those are the three. The three hidden ones for sure. The dishwasher, the wobbly toilet, and then the the water lines to ice and fridge.

Like, super helpful. And again, like, goes back to the other point which we were talking before, which is some of those things are going to be hard to check yourself.

You know, if you don't if you don't, I mean, maybe you're not super handy and you can, but for a lot of people, they either won't know what to look for or, you know, you might not be able to get into some of those things.

So that again, goes back to you might do, prefer a look and then not see anything. But that's where those kind of practitioners could come in handy. You know, come with us because they're going to look in those and those places you might not think about.

So super, super practical and, And so go. Ahead. Those those folks for people who want to know are called IEPs, indoor and, environmental professionals.

I do have, some videos on my YouTube channel, the at Life after mold that go over like how to find a good IEP, all the different hidden spaces for mold and those types of things.

So definitely check that out because it's really important to find a good IEP. The reason why I call that out now in our discussion is a lot of IEPs, are used to servicing the homeowner's insurance system.

And so they are used to not finding things, rather than looking very, very, very, very closely for issues that could be making people sick. Okay. Good point.

And and I'd like to finish off always by talking, you know, practically and talking about things that people can do today. So if you were, you know, to give people some tips about what they could do, you know, whether they, should go start looking for it, should they hire somebody if they're having symptoms or what, what you would want to leave people with in terms of, just some some tips for action to help their family be a little bit more resilient, a little bit more healthy.

You know, right now, I would say the first thing is don't rush, don't rush. You know, you had spending an extra one week, two week or three weeks finding a good team, reaching out to good practitioners, testers.

That is going to be such a huge cost savings to yourself and, you know, your family overall. You know, it took a while for your children, I'm guessing, to become sick.

And those extra few days are usually, I would say, a good trade off for being having it done right the first time. And the second little piece of information, more so a hope hope statement is that kids are so resilient.

It has a saying I usually find once kids get out of exposure, they bounce back so quickly, oftentimes without treatment.

Treatment, Recovery, and Resources

And when I say out of exposure, it doesn't mean that they're removed from the home forever. It can be removed from the home while things are getting cleaned and addressed.

So children just bounce back super quick, super, super quick. And then I think for treatment again, that's really going to vary from, you know, are is your kid dealing more with an allergic thing or they're dealing with more of the toxic reaction or the colonization infection or the inflammation?

In those cases, no matter what the first step is to get it out of exposure. And so finding again, like a family members that they can go hang with for a week or so or, hey, it's with family vacation camp in the backyard week.

You know, things don't have to be, big, scary and traumatic. And every single again kid is going to need, I would say, a different type of treatment. And so I really just want to, also caution parents from just, oh my gosh, that, you know, I was like panicking and freaking out because that's also going to offer a sense of, you know, decreased stability and safeness that's going to put their little system into fight or flight.

And you know, there's there's lots of, wonderful things that can be done to maintain a sense of normalcy and even, enjoyment during this time. And, as your kids are navigating this, as you guys are navigate, you still have to remember that you're also, honoring a childhood there.

And, that will go miles and miles for the kiddo in the future, for sure. Beautifully said. And to echo that, I can say just from my own experience that, you know, I have some very integrated minded patients, you know, naturally by what I do.

So people are more inclined, I think, to test for mold. And they they definitely find it, sometimes. And the vast majority of the time when they find it, if they're having some themselves or kids are having no symptoms or nothing, you know, noticeable or outwardly at least, which is, which is great.

So just because you find something doesn't mean there's going to be a huge issue. And just like you said, the vast majority of the time, if they do find it and they get rid of it, then they don't develop symptoms.

If they had, you know, some mild symptoms and it just gets better on its own. Or you could do some very mild detox. You don't have to do, you know, major, more detoxification for, for the most part.

And they're just totally fine. Yes. Sometimes if there are more serious symptoms and it could be worth to go through a bigger protocol. But that's the, the, the minority, like the big minority, most of the time, you just need to find it and get rid of it.

And that just takes care of itself. So I think that's really, really good advice. Super helpful. You know, people definitely get stressed about this a lot.

They find mold, they're super worried their kid is screwed up for life and they've, you know, done all these things. And that's that's not true. Not usually.

I mean, again, it's like we live with mold. It's everywhere. It's really when you get to this certain point and you're susceptible that and you do it for a very long time where you can run into issues.

And even then, even when that has happened, usually you can still get better. If you find it in you, you know, you detox out. So I really appreciate you being here and talking about this.

Before we go, maybe you can tell people a little bit more about where to find you. If they wanted to work with you, or find a little bit more about all the great resources that you have on mold.

So again, thanks for being here. Yeah, sure. So everyone you can find me on any social media platform, pretty

much, what they handle life after mold. Similarly, YouTube, there's I'm working on cranking out videos nonstop about the, bigger kind of, big questions that people often have about mold.

And of course, there it's also, life after mold. And then if people head over to my website and sign up for my newsletter, they can get Ahold of my, Mold Prevention 101 free e-book that gives you, as I was referring to earlier, sorry if you can hear my cat in the background, that gives you the walk through of, your home and all the possible hotspots that could be there, you know, the dryer than or is there French drains?

And then that way you get a really nice map of what's happening in your home. And then when something changes or an issue happens and, you know, to kind of call out those things and go check them out.

So again, that's at life after MLB.com and I'm super thankful to be here. Thank you for having me. This has been such an honor, and I really hope this has been helpful for folks.

And thank you very much and thanks everyone for listening, and we'll see you in the next session.