

Midwest mold count peaks due to extreme heat, storms

July 26 2011

A record 7 inches of rain combined with the spat of 100-plus degree Fahrenheit days has spawned the highest mold count recorded for the year, just short of an air pollution warning.

“Today’s mold count for the Midwest was 30,000, just 10,000 short of the threshold for an alert warning,” said Joseph Leija, MD, the allergist who performs the Gottlieb [Allergy](#) Count, the official Midwest allergy count for the National Allergy Bureau. “This is the highest mold count I have seen this year.”

And that is just for the air outdoors.

“Many Midwesterners experienced flooding in their homes, which can easily cause indoor mold counts to be much higher – even to dangerous breathing conditions,” Dr. Leija warned. “The heat, the [rain](#), now the pestilence of mold is making this a summer of biblical proportions in the world of allergies.”

Mold Symptoms

Symptoms of respiratory irritation from mold include nasal congestion, difficulty breathing, headaches and post-nasal drip. “People with allergies must stay in air conditioning and use a dehumidifier,” Dr. Leija said.

Mold grows quickly in hot, humid or wet conditions.

“The Midwest has been battling hot, humid weather and outdoor mold spores have been relatively high, but now with the flooding caused by the recent rainfall, many homes are pure poison for those with breathing conditions,” Dr. Leija said. “All soaked drywall must be cut out and removed as well as carpets, tile, cardboard boxes and the like to prevent mold.”

Ironically, water is both the perpetrator for mold and the recommended cure. “Plain water should be used to wash off floors, walls and soaked items, and then everything must be dried thoroughly,” he said. Dr. Leija also recommends that allergy sufferers lightly rinse their nostrils with a saline solution to rinse out trapped particles and spores.

Black Mold Most Toxic

Not all molds are equally dangerous - black mold is the most toxic. “Coughing up blood, nosebleeds, vomiting, diarrhea and even memory loss and pulmonary hemorrhage are symptoms of toxic mold sickness,” Dr. Leija said. The very young, old and those with chronic conditions such as asthma are the most vulnerable.

Those employed as carpenters, carpet cleaners, handymen, plumbers and even gardeners are also at risk for toxic mold inhalation.

“The only way to tell if you suffer from mold allergy is by a skin test performed by an allergist,” Dr. Leija said. “Allergy shots, medications and antihistamines or corticosteroid nasal sprays can help minimize symptoms.”

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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