

Indoor mold poses health risk to asthma sufferers

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Damp and mould in homes could pose a significant health risk to people with asthma according to a new study published in the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*.

By critically reviewing the findings from 17 studies in eight different countries, the research has found that the presence of several types of [mould](#) can lead to [breathing problems](#) in [asthma sufferers](#), as well as increasing the likelihood of developing the condition.

The research has been conducted by a team at the University of Exeter Medical School and is the first time all of the information relating to mould and [asthma](#) has been gathered and analysed together.

One of the study's lead authors, Richard Sharpe, said: "Moulds are abundant in our outdoor and indoor environments, with around 10 varieties living in a typical home. We've found the strongest evidence yet of their potentially harmful effects, with higher levels of some of these moulds presenting a breathing hazard to people suffering from asthma, worsening their symptoms significantly. It also looks as though mould may help to trigger the development of asthma – although research in this area is still in its infancy."

The team identified links between a number of different types of fungi and breathing problems in asthma sufferers, among them *Aspergillus* and the antibiotic-producing *Penicillium*. They also highlighted other factors that can contribute to the risk of asthma, including house dust

mites, pets and chemicals.

Characterised by typically high humidity, homes with poor heating and ventilation can be a haven for house dust mites and mould. Dampness is one of the major factors affecting the growth of mould inside homes - a problem which has been on the rise as ageing houses are sealed and retrofitted with new energy efficient technology.

Yet we currently know very little about how people's living habits can contribute to [indoor air quality](#), and ultimately affect their health. This study highlights the need for homes to have adequate heating, ventilation and home maintenance – all factors that will help to reduce the presence of mould and its effects on [asthma symptoms](#).

Co-author and Senior Research Fellow, Dr Nick Osborne, concluded: "This research has highlighted the need for housing providers, residents and healthcare professionals to work together to assess the impact of housing interventions. We need to make sure that increasing the energy efficiency of people's homes doesn't increase their exposure to damp and mould, and potentially damage their health."

More information: The study Indoor fungal diversity and asthma: A meta-analysis and systematic review of risk factors is published in the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology* and is available here www.jacionline.org/article/S0091-6749

Provided by University of Exeter

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