

Why drying washing indoors can pose a health threat

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(Medical Xpress)—As winter approaches doctors are warning that wet washing dried indoors can pose a serious health threat for people with weakened immune systems or severe asthma.

Experts have found that clothes put on drying frames or draped over warm radiators raise moisture levels in our homes by up to 30 per cent, creating ideal breeding conditions for mould spores – and one in particular called aspergillus fumigatus, which can cause potentially fatal lung infections.

Father of three, Craig Mather from Bolton knows first-hand the damage it can do. For years he dried washing in his bedroom and thought nothing of it. But when he contracted TB in 1997, the disease left his lungs weak, and aggravated the problems he had been left with after childhood asthma.

Craig, who is 43 and a fast food manager, explains: "I only started to recover when my consultant diagnosed chronic pulmonary aspergillosis and prescribed me special drugs to fight the [fungal infection](#). However, I noticed coughing fits and night sweats – particularly when I had wet washing drying on the warm bedroom radiator.

"He told me that it could be making my problems worse, so for the last 12 months I haven't dried my clothes indoors and I've noticed a huge improvement in my health. I can't do strenuous physical activity, but I am off the drugs and only have to go back to the clinic for check-ups

every four months – and I'm able to ride my bike again."

Professor David Denning and his team at the National Aspergillosis Centre, in Manchester, have issued the wet washing warning after treating a growing number of patients who have developed the condition from inhaling the *Aspergillus* fungal spores.

Dr Denning, who is Professor of Infectious Disease in Global Health at The University of Manchester explains: "It's estimated that as many as 87 per cent of us dry our clothes indoors in the winter. One load of wet washing contains almost two litres of water, which is released into the room.

"Most of us are either immune to the fungus which grows in these humid conditions, or have a sufficiently healthy system to fight the infection. But, in asthma sufferers it can produce coughing and wheeziness, and in people with weak or damaged immune systems, such as cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy, Aids patients and people who, like Craig, have an auto-immune disease, the fungus can cause [pulmonary aspergillosis](#) – a condition which can cause irreparable, and sometime fatal, damage to the lungs and sinuses.

"My advice would be when in doubt, dry wet washing outside, in a tumble dryer or in a well ventilated indoor space away from bedrooms and living areas.

"Be safe rather than sorry," he adds.

Provided by University of Manchester

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