Most of us have seen mold or moisture around the home. But did you know that mold is alive? It grows on wet or damp surfaces. It is often gray or black but can also be white, orange, or green. It can grow out in the open, on places like walls, clothes, and appliances. But you may also find it in more hidden places – under carpets or in walls and attics. Mold often smells musty.

Mold produces “spores,” tiny specks you can’t see and that float through the air. When you breathe in mold spores, they get into your lungs. This can cause health problems. People with allergies to mold may have reactions. They include watery eyes; runny or stuffed up noses, sneezing, itching, wheezing, trouble breathing, headaches, and tiredness. Mold can even trigger asthma attacks.

We are learning more about the health problems mold causes. Some molds can cause severe health problems in some people, but scientists disagree about what the problems are. Mold is almost everywhere, but it is not healthy to live where mold is growing. Because mold needs moisture to grow, try to keep your home and everything in it dry.

It’s important to fix any moisture problem in your home right away. Mold can grow fast, so it’s best not to wait. To stop mold from growing, quickly dry or throw away anything that has gotten wet.

**Action Steps:**
- Keep surfaces clean and dry - wipe up spills and overflows right away.
- Store clothes and towels clean and dry - do not let them stay wet in the laundry basket or washing machine.

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• Don’t leave water in drip pans, basements and air conditioners.
• Check the relative humidity in your home. You can buy a kit to do this at a home electronics or hardware store. Stop using your humidifier if the relative humidity is more than 50%.
• If the humidity is high, don’t keep a lot of houseplants.
• Wipe down shower walls with a squeegee or towel after bathing or showering.
• Cut down on steam in the bathroom while bathing or showering. Run a fan that is vented to the outside or open a window.
• Run a fan vented to the outside when cooking.
• If you have a dryer, make sure it is vented to the outside.
• Use a dehumidifier or air conditioner to dry out damp areas.

• When you use your air conditioner, use the “auto fan” setting.
• Throw away wet carpeting, cardboard boxes, insulation, or other things that have been very wet for more than two days.
• Increase airflow in problem areas – open closet doors and move furniture away from outside walls where mold is growing. Move your furniture around once in a while.
• Prevent moisture from collecting on windows by using storm windows.
• Keep people with asthma or allergies away from damp areas of your home.
• Use downspouts to direct rainwater away from the house. Make sure your gutters are working.
• Slope the dirt away from your house’s foundation. Make sure the dirt is lower six feet away from the house than it is next to it.
• Repair leaking roofs, walls, doors, or windows.

How do I clean up mold?
Protect yourself when cleaning up mold. Wear long sleeves and pants, shoes and socks, rubber gloves, and goggles to protect your eyes. Open a window to let in fresh air while you’re working.

Throw away things like carpet or mattresses, wallboard (drywall), ceiling tile, insulation, or cardboard boxes that have been wet for more than two days. Wrap anything you’re going to throw away in plastic to stop mold from spreading. Cleaning up mold puts the spores in the air so it’s a good idea to wear a respirator. Keep small children, elderly, and sick people and anyone with allergies or asthma away during cleanup.

Source: University of Wisconsin Extension

Promoting Safe and Healthy Environments

Home Safety

Did you know that your chances of getting hurt at home are much higher than they are at work or school? The leading causes of death in the home are falls, drowning, fires, poisoning, suffocation, choking, and guns. The good news is that there are simple steps you can take to protect yourself and your family.
Prevent Slips, Trips & Falls

- Keep your floors clear of anything that may cause tripping. Pick up hazards such as toys, shoes and magazines.
- Clean up spills right away so people won’t slip.
- If there are rugs in your home, use non-skid mats and throw rugs.
- When carrying large or heavy loads, make sure you can see where you’re going. Ask for help if you need it.
- Keep your home well lit so you can see where you’re walking at night.

Other tips

- Don’t use chairs or tables as makeshift ladders.
- Wear shoes with non-skid soles and put young children in non-skid socks.
- Teach your children not to run indoors or jump down stairs.
- Teach your children and other family members about the dangers of falling and how to stay safe.

Poison-Proof Your Home

Use this guide to poison-proof your home room-by-room:

- **Kitchen** - Your kitchen is one of the most dangerous places for a child. Drain openers, detergents, oven cleaners, and other cleaners can hurt you and your children. Put safety latches on all cabinets and drawers with harmful products. Even better, put them in a place that children can’t reach. Children often get into dangerous products while someone is using them. If you can, keep your children out of the room while you’re cleaning.
- **Bathroom** - Things in your medicine chest – like medicine, makeup, mouthwash, first aid supplies, deodorants and cleaners can hurt children. Keep these out of their reach. Put a safety latch on your medicine chest.
- **Bedroom** - Keep medicine, medications, perfumes, makeup, and cigarettes out of children’s reach.
- **Living Room** - Things to look for in the living room are: liquor, cigarettes, furniture polish, lamp oil, and some plants. Keep these out of reach.
- **Garage, Basement, and Laundry Room** - These are some of the most dangerous places in your home. There are lots of chemicals and poisons in them that can hurt or kill a child: bleach, anti-freeze, gasoline, kerosene, car polishes, car batteries, paints, paint removers, mothballs, bug spray, road salt, and more. It’s safest to keep children out of these places altogether.

Do you know what to do if someone in your home gets poisoned? If you think someone has been poisoned, call your local Poison Control Center right away at 1-800-222-1222. Keep this number next to all of your telephones. Make sure you know:

- Brand name of product
- Type of product
- Contents as listed on label
- About how much the person ate or drank
- How the person came in contact with the poison (mouth, skin, etc.)
- How long the person was in contact with the poison
- The person’s age and weight
- How you tried to help the person, if you did

Prevent Fires and Burns

Put in a smoke alarm on every floor of your home in or near every sleeping area. This will cut in half the chances of someone dying in a fire.

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**Playing with fire** - matches, lighters, stoves or heaters – is the leading cause of fire-related death for children five and under. Storing matches, lighters, and other heat sources in a safe place like a locked drawer will help keep your children from playing with them. Don’t let children play near the stove or grill either.

Teach your children how to prevent fires, and what to do if there is a fire. Plan and practice a fire escape route with your family. Do this at night and with the lights off so you’ll be ready if there is a fire. Take special steps for getting children, the elderly, and people who may not be able to save themselves out of the building.

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**Does my body need fats?** Yes, it does – but not a lot. Fats are essential to give your body energy and to support cell growth. They also help protect your organs and help keep your body warm. Fats help your body absorb some nutrients and produce important hormones, too. Your body definitely needs fat – but not as much fat as most people eat.

**How many different fats are there?** There are four major fats in the foods we eat: saturated fats, trans fats, monounsaturated fats and polyunsaturated fats. These types have different chemical structures and physical properties. The bad fats, saturated and trans fats, tend to be more solid at room temperature (like a stick of butter), while monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats tend to be more liquid (like liquid vegetable oil).

Fats can also have different effects on the cholesterol levels in your body. The bad fats, saturated fats and trans fats raise bad cholesterol (LDL) levels in your blood. Monounsaturated fats and polyunsaturated fats don’t seem to raise bad cholesterol levels and are beneficial when consumed in moderation.

**Do all fats have the same number of calories?** There are nine calories in every gram of fat, regardless of what type of fat it is. That’s a lot of calories compared to carbohydrates and proteins, which contain four calories per gram.

Because fats are so energy dense, consuming high levels of fat – regardless of the type of fat – can lead to taking in too many calories. Consuming high levels of saturated or trans fats can also lead to heart disease and stroke. Health experts generally recommend replacing saturated fats and trans fats with monounsaturated fats and polyunsaturated fats – while still limiting the total amount of fat you consume.

**Are all foods labeled “trans fat-free” healthy foods?** Not necessarily. Foods labeled “trans fat-free” or cooked with “trans fat-free” oils may contain a lot of saturated fats, which raise your bad cholesterol levels. “Trans fat-free” foods may also be unhealthy in terms of their general nutrient content. For example, baked goods tend to be high in added sugars and low in nutrients.

**Can fats be part of healthy diet?** Eating foods with a small amount of fat is definitely part of a healthy diet. Just remember to balance the amount of calories you eat with the amount of calories you burn. Aim to eat more vegetables, fruits, whole-grain/high-fiber foods, fat-free and low-fat dairy products, lean meats, poultry, and fish (at least twice a week). Doing so means that your diet will be low in both saturated fats and trans fats.

**Does eating healthy mean giving up my favorite foods?** A healthy diet can include the foods you love. You don’t have to avoid sugary or salty treats entirely, but you do need to eat less of these foods since they’re low in nutrition and high in calories. **Source:** American Heart Association