



Concerned About Mold in Your Home?

Written By: Jennifer Woodruff/Stephens Heating

Mold is being dubbed “the new asbestos” in the building industry. New homes being built in a hurry to accommodate the hungry homeowners often are not allowed enough time to dry out properly in our wet Oregon weather. In rare instances, this has been blamed for causing mold growth in the home. I recently visited the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency website to learn a little more about molds myself since this is a growing concern in the HVAC industry as well. I recommend visiting this website to read the “ten things you should know about mold” in addition to other materials on how to control moisture in your home.

EPA MOLD RESOURCES

Since mold needs three things to grow: oxygen, food, and moisture, we in the HVAC industry have some suggestions on how to fight 2 of the 3. Oxygen, of course, is impossible to eliminate. We do have a certain amount of control over our home’s humidity, however. The most obvious way to eliminate moisture is venting. Bathroom fan vents, kitchen hood vents, dryer vents - these will all pull moisture out of the house while you’re taking a shower, cooking, drying clothes, cleaning, even running the dishwasher. Your heating contractor can run these vents for you if you do not already have them in your home.

Now let’s look at your heating system and ductwork. While your HVAC system’s ability to remove moisture and mold is limited, there are still some options you may want to try.

▶ **Air Conditioning:** Most people consider this a luxury that is/isn’t necessary, but it does provide de-humidification. It also lowers the temperature in your home. As the temperature in your home comes down, the air is less able to hold moisture and one of the 3 factors for mold growth is reduced as the air in your home passes over the A.C. coil and the moisture condenses into your drain pan.

▶ **Dehumidifier:** If you have air conditioning, a dehumidifier isn’t necessary. Dehumidifiers are, however, a less expensive alternative to air conditioning. These units work by sucking the air over a cold coil, condensing and storing the moisture in what is usually called a “water bucket,” heating the air back to its normal temperature, then releasing it back into the room. Most units will shut down when their water pan is full.

▶ **Ultra-Violet Air Treatment System:** Sounds complicated, I know, but it’s actually quite simple. These lights are installed in your ductwork. As the air circulates through your duct system, it is forced to pass over the ultra violet light. The ultra violet light in most models will kill up to 70% of the airborne bacteria (including mold spores) that are passing through your ductwork.

Whatever option you choose, be sure that you are aware of the spaces in your home where mold may accumulate. Check them regularly! If you are having any home-improvements done, ask your contractor to look for mold while he’s in those tight spaces, such as your attic or crawl space. You would be surprised at what they can find!

If you are worried that you have a severe mold problem, or that your family’s health is being jeopardized by toxic mold, we recommend contacting the following company for questions and/or mold test kits:

**ServPro
Linn & Benton
Counties
541-745-2097**