

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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High moisture levels from recent rainfalls and ongoing humidity levels have caused public health officials to caution residents regarding levels of mold in the home. Mold is a serious issue and people should use common sense coupled with additional concern regarding mold cleanup issues.

Tabi Prochazka is the environmental coordinator for Panhandle Public Health District. “A mold allergy can show up looking like a summer cold,” she said. “Stuffy nose, wheezing and sneezing, headaches and fever could be an allergic reaction to the spores that will grow nearly anywhere, given the right amount of moisture.”

Mold is a microscopic fungi that lives on plants or animals, she continued. There are 1.5 million species of fungi. Mold typically originates outside the home and comes into the home through windows and doors, growing most readily in kitchens and bathrooms. “No home is mold free,” Prochazka said. “In fact, a recent study showed 100% of homes have some mold growing on a surface.”

“To clean moldy areas, wipe them down first with water and then wash again with a solution of bleach and water,” Prochazka said. The recommended solution of bleach to water is one cup bleach to five gallons of water, but NEVER more than one cup bleach to one gallon of water.

Open the windows to allow for plenty of circulation when using the bleach solution, she added. “You need to be particularly careful to thoroughly disinfect surfaces that may come in contact with food, such as countertops, pantry shelves, refrigerators, etc.,” Prochazka said. Bleach neutralizes the mold allergens.

To help prevent mold in your home, Prochazka further advised:

- fix leaky pipes
- use a dehumidifier and exhaust fans
- dispose of moldy material immediately and
- always clean with a bleach-based product.

A final concern is the large amount of pooled water remaining after recent heavy rains will lead to an increase in mosquito populations. Prochazka said the majority of the mosquitoes will be pests, but will not carry communicable diseases. However, you should protect yourself from mosquitoes and the possibility of contracting West Nile Virus with screens on doors and windows, wearing long sleeves and pants and using repellants containing DEET for personal protection. Do not forget to drain all standing water left in containers around your home.

For additional information about mold, visit www.pphd.org. The purpose of the Panhandle Public Health District is to educate the region it serves about the prevention of epidemics, spread of contagious diseases, injury, illness and disability. The district is charged with promoting and encouraging healthy behaviors. They promote the quality and accessibility of health services and protection against environmental hazards. Through education, protection and promotion of these issues, the Panhandle Public Health District believes the quality of life of the residents they serve can be greatly improved.