

THE HOMEOWNERS JOURNAL

IN THIS ISSUE:

Mold, should it concern me? 1-2

Masking for a quality paint job. 1-2

The Homeowners Journal, is a quarterly newsletter published by JRV Home Inspection Services, LLC. Any comments, questions or suggestions for an article, please contact the editor **Jim Quarello** by e-mail at: jquarello@jrvhomeinspections.com

Or by phone: 203-697-1147.

JRV HOME INSPECTION SERVICES, LLC
28 Edgewood Drive
Wallingford CT 06492

MOLD, SHOULD IT CONCERN ME?

By JAMES QUARELLO

That is a question many people are asking these days. With a great amount of media attention focused on mold, it is difficult not to be a little concerned. But as a lot of times occur with stories reported in the media the accounts are sometimes incomplete or inaccurate. This article will attempt to give a reasonably precise overview of mold and how it may affect you in your home and what you can do to lower your risks of mold contamination.

Mold research is continually on going with still very little known about how mold lives. This lack of broad knowledge would almost certainly be a contributing factor in much of the misinformation circulating about mold. What is known is that too much mold can make you sick.

What exactly is mold? Molds are simple microscopic organisms virtually every where present. We are exposed to mold everyday without apparent harm. Molds are extremely beneficial to us because they decompose dead plant material. Without them we would quite literally be worms living in leaves and other plant litter. Mold is a member of the king-

dom of fungi, which includes mushrooms and yeasts. Unlike plants molds require an external energy source to grow and reproduce. They derive their energy from the decay of organic material such as wood, paper (cellulose), foodstuff, or leaves and by the presence of enough moisture. Molds slowly destroy whatever they are growing on.

Molds possess root like structures called hyphae. These "roots" penetrate the substance and break it down while "feeding" the mold. These structures are impossible to entirely kill or remove unless the substrate is replaced. Because molds are endowed with this trait if the area they once thrived in becomes wet again the mold will return.

Molds reproduce by what are commonly known as spores. Mold spores usually cause the health-related problems we frequently hear about or may experience ourselves. Reactions usually occur when spores are present in large numbers and are inhaled, although some people may be over sensitized and have a response to lower concentrations. You may also become ill either by touching or ingesting mold

Continued on page 2....

PROPER MASKING ESSENTIAL TO QUALITY PAINT JOB

As any experienced painter will tell you, good painting is not about how to get the paint onto the surface – it's about how to keep it *off* everything else! A good masking job is every bit as important as a good paint job, and happily the proper tools and materials are inexpensive and easy to come by, and the techniques are easy to learn.

WHAT YOU NEED

Proper masking begins with good quality tape. For most jobs, you'll need rolls of both 1-inch- and 2-inch-wide top-quality masking tape. The cost difference between quality tape and bargain tape is miniscule when compared to the overall cost of the paint job, but the

difference in quality and frustration can be significant, so don't scrimp. Also, only use masking tape. Duct tape, electrical tape, packaging tape, or any of the other tapes on the market that are designed for purposes other than painting will either not seal well enough to hold back the paint, or they'll seal so well that they will damage the underlying surface when you pull them off.

The most common masking tape is the standard tan tape, which will work for most projects. If you will be applying the tape in an area of high heat, such as on a metal window frame in direct sunlight, or if you're a slow painter and the masking will have to remain

in place for more than a day or so, consider using the blue extended-use tape instead. This type of masking tape has a lighter tack to the adhesive so it won't harden onto the surface when heated or left on for extended periods, and it's also great for applying over more delicate surfaces such as wallpaper.

In addition to the masking tape, you will need some masking paper and painter's plastic. Masking paper is a brown Kraft paper sold in rolls of various widths, typically from 3 inches wide to 12 inches wide. Masking paper is resistant to moisture for short periods of time, and is perfect for masking baseboards,

Continued on Page 2...

Typical symptoms that have been reported by mold exposed people include:

- Respiratory problems such as wheezing, difficulty breathing, and shortness of breath
- Nasal and sinus congestion
- Eye irritation
- Dry, hacking cough
- Nose or throat irritation
- Skin rashes or irritation

Some molds in addition to their allergenic properties may produce potentially toxic compounds called mycotoxins. Probably the most notorious of these mold types is *Stachybotrys chartarum*. A wide variety of symptoms have been reported from exposure to mycotoxins from molds, some of these include:

- Fatigue, headache, and nausea
- General malaise
- Organic Dust Toxic Syndrome (ODTS) which produces flue like symptoms

How can you tell if you have a possible mold problem in your home? If you *see* discolored patches or cottony or speckled growth on walls or furniture or if you *smell* an earthy or musty odor. You may also be suspicious of mold contamination if mold-allergic individuals *experience* some of the symptoms listed here when in the dwelling. Evidence of past or on-going water damage should also necessitate further inspection. Mold growth may be hidden under water damaged surfaces or behind walls and ceilings.

What are the causes of extreme mold growth?

Molds are a symptom of an excessive moisture condition. Therefore your first step in curing mold trouble is to locate and repair the water problem. Many times this water incursion is readily apparent, but sometimes it may be hidden. Some things you should be looking for are:

- Flooding
- Leaky roofs and clogged gutters
- Plumbing leaks
- Damp basement or crawl space
- Steam from showers or cooking
- Humidifiers
- Clothes dryers exhausting indoors
- Bathroom exhaust fans terminating in attic (this is a very common defect often found during a routine home inspection)

Warping doors and discoloration of walls and ceilings can be an indication of a moisture problem possibly due to lack of adequate attic or other home ventilation. Condensation on windows or walls is also an important sign of a hidden moisture source.

Once the damp condition has been identified and corrected, how do you get rid of the mold? The homeowner with a few personal precautions can usually clean up small areas (10 square feet or less). The use of an N-95 particulate respirator is essential. You should also:

- Wear protective clothing that is easily cleaned or discarded.
- Use rubber gloves and protective goggles.
- If you feel the cleaning is adversely affecting your health, consider paying a licensed contractor to do the work.

- Ask family members to leave the area being cleaned.
- Work for short periods and rest in fresh air.
- Air out your house well during and after work.

What precautions can you take to prevent your home from being conducive to excessive mold growth? Inspect your home routinely for indications and sources of indoor moisture and mold as listed here. Ultimately moisture control is the key to mold control, so when a spill or water leak occurs, act swiftly!

- Stop the source of the leak
- Remove excess water
- When possible, move wet items to a well-ventilated area or outdoors to expedite drying.
- Move rugs and pull up carpet quickly
- Run portable fans to increase air circulation
- Run dehumidifiers and air conditioners to lower humidity
- DO NOT turn up the heat or use portable heaters in confined areas, higher temperatures *increase* the rate of mold growth.
- If water has soaked behind walls, it may be necessary to open wall cavities.

If damp materials or areas are dried within 24-48 hours after a leak or spill happen, in most instances mold will not grow.

Further information on mold may be obtained from the US EPA either by calling the New England Regional Office @ **617-918-1630** or on the web @ www.epa.gov.

trim, windows, and many other uses. Resist the temptation to save a couple of pennies by using newspaper, which will sag and tear off when it gets wet from the paint, and can transfer ink to underlying surfaces.

Painter's plastic, which is thin plastic sheeting, is also sold in rolls that vary from 12 inches to about 9 feet in width. Totally moisture resistant, it is used for masking anything from floors and walls to cabinets and trim.

APPLICATION TECHNIQUES

If you want your paint to stick to the wall, the wall needs to be clean – otherwise the paint simply adheres to the underlying dirt and quickly comes back off. The same principle is true with masking. If the surface you are attaching the tape to is dirty, dusty, wet, or greasy, the tape simply won't stick for very

long, so make sure everything is clean and dry before you get started.

For applying the tape and paper or plastic, the ideal tool is a masking machine, which can be purchased inexpensively at any paint store or home center. A masking machine is a hand-held tool that holds both a roll of tape and a roll of paper. Simply place the tape on the large spool of the masker and the paper roll on the small spool, then unroll a short length of tape and adhere it to the edge of the paper, so that the tape is half on and half off the paper's edge. Now, simply pull the paper off the roll as you go, and the tape will unwind with it.

As it unrolls, half the tape will be attached to the paper, and the other half will be exposed for attaching it to the desired surface. Align the tape against the edge of what you're mask-

ing, and then pull the masker along the edge to unroll a perfect line of paper and masking tape. Press the tape down firmly as you go for good adhesion. A built-in cutter bar on the edge of the masking machine allows you to easily tear off the paper and tape at the length you need.

Two other simple rules to remember about masking. First of all, learn to paint carefully, as if the tape isn't there. It's too easy to get a false sense of security from the presence of the tape and the paper, and even the best masking job will allow bleed-through along the edges if you put too much paint on it. Second, apply the masking a short time before you're ready to paint, and remove it as soon as practical. The longer the masking stays in place, the more likely it is to fail or to leave undesirable residue behind.