

Are biological contaminants invading your home?

By Doris A. Black

Do you or members of your family sneeze frequently or have nasal or respiratory problems on a regular basis? You could have biological contaminants in your home. Biological contaminants are microscopic organisms present in the air we breathe. The tiny particles of dust, pollen, mold and pet dander can pose serious health problems, such as asthma.

Contaminants are usually carried into the house on shoes, clothing, hair and pets, where they breed in upholstered furniture, bedding, drapes, carpeting and other areas. By securing our homes against Jack Frost or the sizzling heat of summer, we trap these dangerous contaminants inside.

What can you do to rid your home of these potentially dangerous organisms? Start with a whole-house search for the perfect growing conditions – moist, humid areas. Bathrooms, laundry rooms and basements with poor air circulation are key places to look, as is any room with recent water damage. As you take stock of each level of your home, look for signs that indicate the presence of biological organisms, such as dampness in the floors or foundation, black mold on walls or ceilings, musty odors, dust or recent pest problems.

Starting at the top of the house, make sure your attic is well ventilated and moisture free. Roof vents are an excellent way to circulate air in the attic. If you have an older home that was built without roof vents, consider installing an attic fan to

regularly vent the space.

Next, check out the bedrooms and living rooms. Carpeting and fabric are potential problem areas. Carpeting can harbor moisture and is the perfect breeding ground for all kinds of organisms. Regular cleaning will help control the infestation, but no method short of removal will completely eradicate organisms. Experts recommend foregoing carpeting if a family member has asthma. Hardwood floors are a safer alternative and just need a weekly mopping to stay clean. Upholstered furniture, window coverings, bedding and stuffed animals all collect dead skin flakes, encouraging high populations of dust mites. Again, regular cleaning is ide-



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