

# Mold 101

## Rochester Healthy Home Partnership

Thanks to: Healthy Environments for Children Initiative Department of Extension, University of Connecticut

# What features make a home healthy?

Safe?



Dry?



No pests?

No dangerous chemicals?

In good repair?



Fresh air?

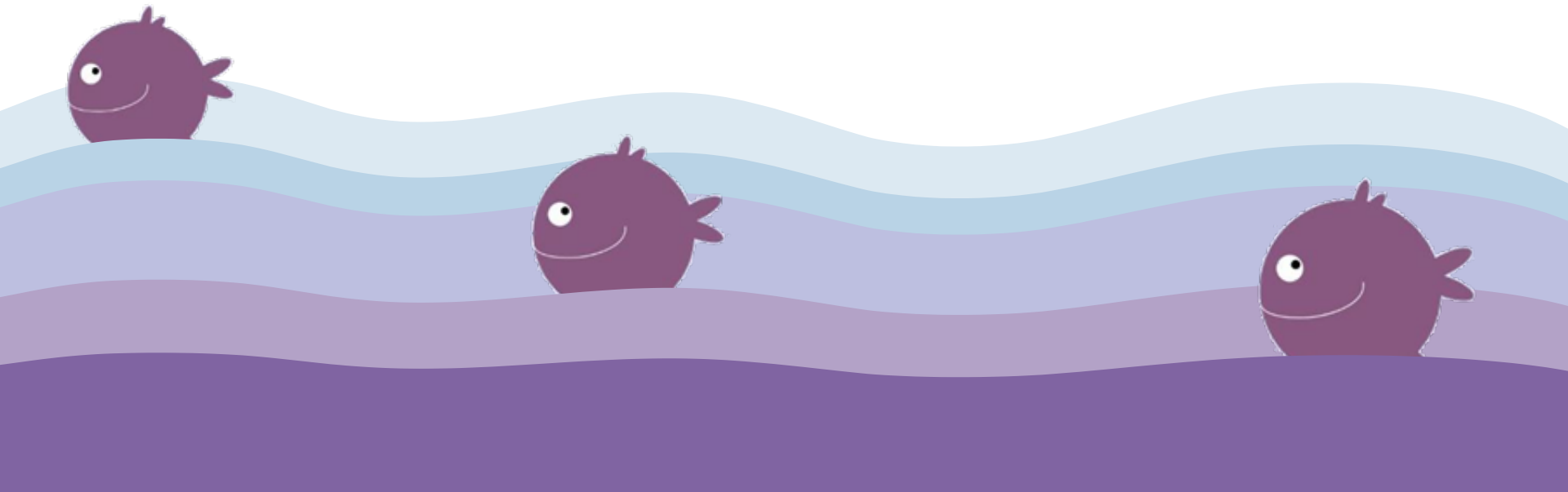
Clean?

# Keep it dry

## Main idea

### Reduce pests and mold

- A home with too much moisture encourages mold and pests to live and grow
- Both mold and pests can
  - Damage belongings
  - Cause various health problems



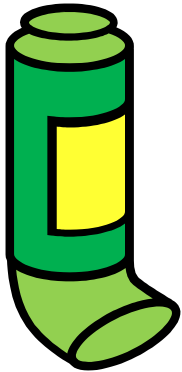
# Keep it dry

## Health effects

### Mold

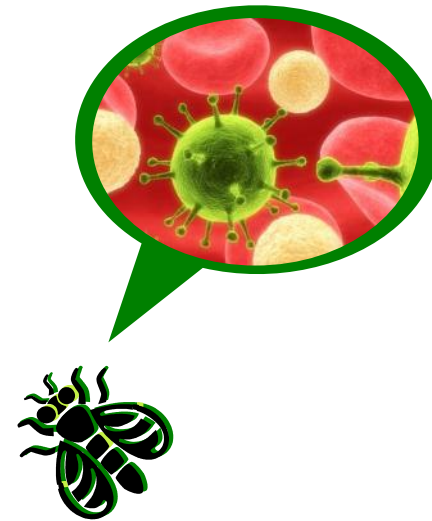
- May make breathing problems worse, especially for people with

- Asthma
- Allergies to mold
- Respiratory illnesses (such as lung infections)

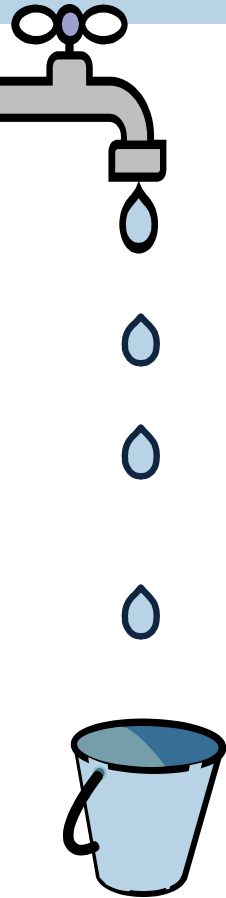


### Pests

- May trigger asthma attacks
- May carry diseases



# Keep it dry



- Leaking or dripping pipes
- Water droplets on cold windows
- Water stains or damage
- Warping or rotting wood
- Peeling, blistering, or cracking paint
- Clogged gutters or plugged downspouts
- Cracks in foundation

## Signs of problem

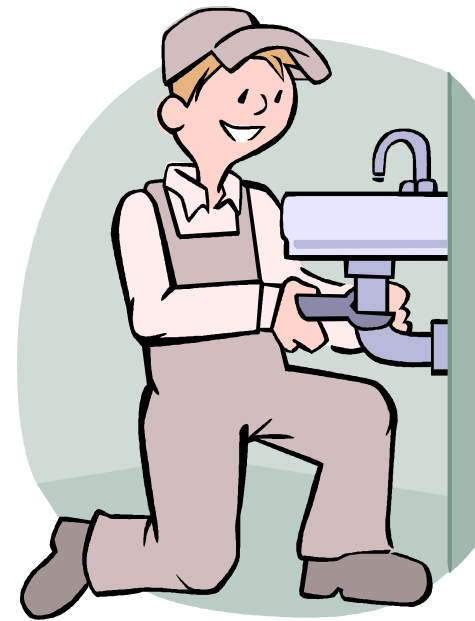
- Mold that you see (often as speckled patches, in any color) or smell (musty or earthy), especially in
  - Bathrooms and kitchens
  - Damp basements, closets, and laundry areas
  - Areas where there have been leaks or water damage

# Keep it dry

## Fix the problem

### Reduce moisture

- Find sources of moisture—such as leaks inside and outside home—and repair them
- Clean up water and other spills right away
- Use exhaust fans or open windows
  - In bathroom after showering or bathing
  - In kitchen when cooking and washing dishes
- Clean downspouts and gutters
- Make sure that water drains away from home
- Use dehumidifiers and air-conditioners if available



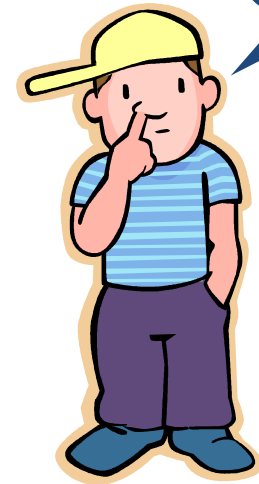
# Keep it dry

## Fix the problem

### Mold

If you see or smell it, it should be cleaned up promptly

- Usually **not** necessary to test to learn
  - Whether you have mold
  - Type of mold
- Consider hiring trained professional if
  - Moldy area is large
  - Damage was caused by contaminated water (like sewage)
  - Mold is hidden in walls or ceilings
  - You have asthma, severe allergies to mold, or a weak immune system



What's  
that  
nasty  
smell?

# Keep it dry

## Fix the problem

### Mold

To safely clean hard surfaces (like tile or fiberglass)

- Keep other people away from area where you'll be working
- Close off area: shut door, or put up plastic sheet
- Bring in fresh air (open windows, or blow air **from inside to outside** with exhaust fan)
- Protect yourself
  - Wear long rubber gloves
  - Consider goggles and a face mask
- Scrub well with detergent and water
- Rinse with clean rag or sponge and clean water
- Dry thoroughly with clean rags or paper towels





# Keep it dry

## Fix the problem

### Mold

- If item—like carpet or upholstered furniture—absorbs water, you **may** be able to save it **if**
  - You can dry it **completely** within 24 hours (warm weather) to 48 hours (cold weather) *and*
  - You don't see or smell any mold
- If item has been wet for more than 24-48 hours
  - Throw it out

**When in doubt, throw it out**



# Keep the air fresh

## Main idea

### Make breathing easier

- Most people spend most of their time indoors
- Indoor air often contains unhealthy chemicals from
  - Household products (such as cleaning supplies)
  - Furnaces
  - Other devices
- Bringing fresh air into home
  - Helps to remove or dilute these chemicals
  - Makes breathing healthier



# Keep the air fresh

## Health effects

- Chemicals from household products may have various health effects
- In home that is poorly ventilated, poor air quality may

- Make allergy or asthma symptoms worse
- Make your eyes red
- Make your nose and throat burn
- Make you feel tired
- Give you headaches often
- Allow mold to grow



# Keep the air fresh

## Signs of problem

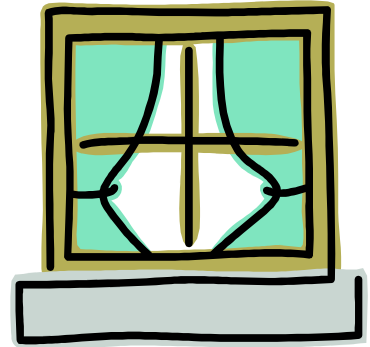
- You see or smell mold, fumes, smoke, or strong or unpleasant smells
- Surfaces are very dusty
- Heating and air conditioner filters and vents are dirty or clogged with dust
- Clothes dryer is not vented to outside
- Exhaust fans in bathrooms or kitchen are
  - Missing
  - Not working
  - Not vented to outside



# Keep the air fresh

## Fix the problem

- Bring in fresh air
  - Open windows whenever possible
- Vent air that's not fresh to the outside
  - Use exhaust fans vented to the outside in bathrooms and kitchens
  - Vent all appliances that burn fuel to the outside



# Mold messages

- Don't panic!
- Mold affects different people differently
- Cleanup with:
  - Water and detergent, not bleach
  - Dry thoroughly
  - Dispose of materials that can't be cleaned
- Mold means moisture: address the cause
- Monitor moisture (30-50% RH)
- Get help for bigger problems

# Local mold resources

- City of Rochester
- Monroe County Department of Public Health
- Housing professionals
- Mold specialists (environmental firms)

# Mold resources (internet)

- <https://www.aiha.org/public-resources/consumer-resources/disaster-response-resource-center/mold-resource-center>
- <https://aiha-assets.sfo2.digitaloceanspaces.com/AIHA/resources/Facts-About-Mold-A-Consumer-Focus-Fact-Sheet.pdf>
- <https://www.epa.gov/mold>
- [https://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/air\\_quality/](https://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/air_quality/)
- <https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/environmental-health-sciences/community-engagement-core/projects-partnerships/healthy-homes/resources.aspx>