

What symptoms do you have when exposed to mold in your home, and what are the best remedies to use if you are allergic?

Lori M., Euless, TX

Great question. Mold is a common trigger of allergy and asthma symptoms. The common nasal symptoms that can manifest if you have mold allergy will be stuffy, runny, itchy nose and postnasal drip. It can also cause itchy, red eyes. The most common asthma symptoms would be cough, wheeze, shortness of breath, and tight chest. Other allergens like cat, dog, dust mite, tree pollen, grass pollen, and weed pollen can also cause the same symptoms. Mold is typically not a trigger of headache by itself. Similarly, mold allergy is not a trigger of chronic fatigue, muscle issues, or behavior issues like ADHD. The only way to find out if you

have an allergy is with a blood or skin allergy test that can be done by an allergist. The best way to prevent allergy symptoms if you have an allergy is to avoid what you are allergic to. Mold is commonly found outdoors throughout the year in Texas. So, it is hard to avoid the mold spores that originate from outdoors. Mold can be present inside as well—especially if there has been any water damage to the floors, carpet, or ceiling. If you have carpet in your bathroom, there is likely mold in the carpet and/or carpet pad. Remediation of mold in one's home typically requires replacement of any obvious wet material that is present as well as the use of a water/bleach solution to kill off residual

mold. Air cleaners and efficient air filters may help as well. Air duct cleaning may help if there is an obvious source of mold in the ducts. Most of the typical medications used to treat symptoms of allergy include allergy medications like antihistamines and/or steroid nasal sprays. Allergy shots or immunotherapy are also very effective.

John Van Wagoner, MD
Board Certified in Adult and Pediatric Allergy, Asthma and Immunology
SouthWest Allergy and Asthma Center, Plano
972-398-3500
www.swallergy.com

My friend had laser hair removal and said that it did not work. I would like to do it – but does it really work and is it permanent?

Claudia R., Grapevine, TX

If you're interested in laser hair removal, it's important, as a first step, to learn how it works. Laser hair removal technology uses a beam of light and a constant source of heat that penetrates the hair follicle, disabling and then destroying it at its root while preserving the surrounding skin. The procedure of removing unwanted hair is simply targeting the hair follicle and then directing the laser beam at its root.

Whether laser hair removal will work for you involves several factors, most prominently hair color and skin type. Generally speaking, treatment has been found to be most successful on people with dark hair and fair skin. Light hair, such as blonde or red, contains a pigment that doesn't absorb laser energy as well and therefore, does not respond as well to therapy. People with dark brown or black hair have the highest rates of response.

A patient's skin color is also a determining factor. Light-skinned people generally respond best. People with darker complexions at birth will not be ideal candidates for laser hair removal - simply because the laser may not be as easily attracted to the darkness of the

hair. Although some lasers are effective for darker complexions, many more treatments will be required. There are currently two types of lasers best suited for darker skin tones: the Diode - such as the Coherent Light Sheer and the Yag - such as the Candela GentleYag and the Altus Cool Glide. It is also important to mention that it is not advisable to have treatment if you have a tan, since tanning can lead to unwelcome side effects including blistering and discoloration. You must wait until the tan completely fades and to be on the safe side, you should avoid sun exposure four to six weeks before treatment.

Like any procedure, laser hair removal should not be undertaken without a thorough examination of the risks, benefits, costs, and success rates. Questions to ask include the brand and types of laser used, how long they've been using them, the number of patients treated at the center, and whether there is a consulting physician on-site. Before scheduling a procedure, you should discuss with your physician the factors that determine whether you are a good candidate for laser hair removal. Laser hair removal is a medical procedure and

you should exercise the same care in choosing a professional as you would in choosing a surgeon.

Fiona Wright MD
Skin MD & Beyond
972-608-0808
www.FionaWrightMD.com

Dr. Fiona Wright is the founder of Skin MD and Beyond Wellness Center (formerly the Aesthetic Institute of Plano). She has lived and practiced in Collin County for 12 years and has earned a reputation as one of the premier physicians in the area of cosmetic dermatology in the Dallas - Fort Worth area. She has been featured in several NBC News Health Reports and is well known for her honest opinions and expertise.

