

**CNN SATURDAY MORNING NEWS**

**"Weekend House Call"**

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**MARTIN SAVIDGE, CNN ANCHOR: Weekend House Call with Dr. Sanjay Gupta begins right now.**

**DR. SANJAY GUPTA, CNN CORRESPONDENT: Good morning.**

**Welcome to Weekend House Call.**

**Today we're talking about mold. Well, it's been in the headlines a lot lately. Ed McMahon, you know him, he won \$7.2 million, not in a Publisher's Clearinghouse, but in a mold lawsuit. Beagles are sniffing out mold in California and spore scares are evacuating schools.**

**Is it something you should be concerned about? That's what you're asking yourself? Or is it more hype than hazard?**

**(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)**

**GUPTA (voice-over): When Gloria Green's (ph) basement flooded, her problems had just begun.**

**GLORIA GREEN: The moment that I step in the house, I usually carry a Kleenex or a tissue with me and my eyes start watering.**

**GUPTA: Mold is everywhere, microscopic fungi that live in every yard and every home.**

**UNIDENTIFIED MALE: You can go in any home, any wall, any cabinet and swab that area and you're going to have mold, because it's part of the environment.**

**GUPTA: As the Greens learned, given the proper conditions, mold spores that lie dormant for years can germinate and make some people feel sick.**

**Dr. Stanley Fineman, an Atlanta allergist, hears a lot about mold from his patients, but worries that recent lawsuits and media reports of toxic mold have fueled undue hysteria.**

**DR. STANLEY FINEMAN, ALLERGIST: We see a lot of patients who read**

articles or talk to other people and are really scared of the fact that they might get sick from a mold exposure.

**GUPTA:** The EPA also plays down the hype.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE:** I think the notion that this is some widespread epidemic in the United States is really, is overblown. **GUPTA:** But everyone agrees prolonged exposure over a protracted period of time can be a problem, particularly for people with allergies, asthma, respiratory disease, hypersensitivity or weakened immune system. For them, mold can produce such symptoms as nasal and sinus congestion, cough, wheezing, breathing difficulties, sore throat, skin and eye irritation or upper respiratory infections.

Louie Prestigiacoamo isn't allergic and he isn't worried. He's cleaning up a home overwhelmed by mold and plans to move in.

**LOUIE PRESTIGIACOMO:** I know that mold exists everywhere. It exists in nature and everybody's home. It's just at a higher level here.

**GUPTA:** According to the EPA, if you have more than 10 square feet of visible mold, it's time to call in a professional. But in modest cases, the answer can be as simple as a call to the plumber and a little soapy water.

**(END VIDEOTAPE)**

**GUPTA:** And what I learned is that a dry house is a safe house. It's key for keeping mold at bay. Mold loves moisture, so if you get rid of the dampness you're going to get rid of the majority of the mold. Now, if mold is a problem in your home, clean it up promptly. That's really key. And fix the water problem, the source. It's important to dry water damaged areas and all those items within 24 to 48 hours to prevent additional mold growth. Buy a dehumidifier. It can reduce the moisture in your home, as well.

If you want to prevent mold from growing, here are a few tips. It's most likely to grow in basements and bathrooms -- remember the two Bs. So try to get ventilation in those areas especially. Also try and make sure your entire house has adequate ventilation elsewhere. Run a fan when showering. This is an important point. And try to keep the humidity level in your home below 50 percent.

Lots of people e-mailing on this topic. Lots of interest. We've had a lot of e-mails. We also want to hear from you on the phone, so call us. Our number, 1-800-807-2620. Our e-mail address again, [housecall@cnn.com](mailto:housecall@cnn.com).

Glenn Fellman from the Indoor Air Quality Association is going to be

joining us from Chicago and I just had -- I learned all about television this morning. I heard that the bird was down and that there was no one in the teleport. Therefore he's not on the television, or at least not right now. He joins us by phone.

Welcome, Mr. Fellman.

How are you doing?

**GLENN FELLMAN, INDOOR AIR QUALITY ASSOCIATION:** I'm doing great, thank you very much.

**GUPTA:** All right, we'll, hopefully we'll get you on television here, as well. It's going to be a little bit of radio for you for a little while, but nonetheless the information is going to be just as good.

A quick question for you before we even start. We've got a lot of e-mails. Toxic mold and black mold, it seems I read about this in the newspapers all the time. What exactly is that and how prevalent a problem is that, as well?

**FELLMAN:** Toxic mold is a term, really a media term that's come out more than a technical term of ours in the industry. Mold can grow anywhere in a home and there's a variety of different species and looks to mold. Whether it's black or green or white really isn't the issue. You just don't want to have the mold indoors.

There can be mold that is black in color which may not be harmful and which could be harmful.

**GUPTA:** OK. As I mentioned, lots of e-mail questions. And we want to try and get as many of these as we can, so we'll do some of these rapid sequence.

A quick e-mail now from Mark in Texas.

He asks, "How can you determine if you have a mold problem in your home if it's inside a wall?" I was wondering that same thing. "Is there a recognizable smell or should there be some evidence also on the outside of the wall?"

**FELLMAN:** It would be very common to have an odor, a musky or a moldy odor and if there is a lot of mold growing behind a wall, eventually that mold is going to make it's way into the indoor spaces where you can see it.

Now, as for detecting mold behind a wall, it's not something that a homeowner could very easily do. If they're suspicious, if there's signs that

there could be mold in the home, they can bring in a specialist who can detect it.

**GUPTA:** OK. A phone caller, as well. A phone call coming in from Hawaii. And I believe that's about six hours ahead of time, so she's either just waking up or just going to bed.

Carol from Hawaii, welcome to House Call.

Do you have a question?

**CAROL:** Yes, thank you.

I'm calling, I have mold -- it's black -- in the bathroom around the sink and in the kitchen. I use bleach and it takes it away temporarily. But I'm having trouble breathing. Could you tell me that that might be the cause or not?

**GUPTA:** A lot of people are asking about this sort of stuff, Glenn.

What do you tell someone like Carol?

**FELLMAN:** It potentially could be, but that's something that really your doctor or your allergist would need to determine by doing some testing to see if you have sensitivities to mold. As to mold growing in those areas, those are very wet areas of the home. They probably have standing water on them or just a surface amount of it. And to clean a hard surface, a non-porous surface in the way you've said is a good idea.

Bleach should be used sparingly on not a full concentration.

**GUPTA:** And how often does someone have to clean that over and over again with bleach?

**FELLMAN:** Well, if it's a sink area or a bathroom area, it should be cleaned very frequently. It's just a good hygiene practice.

Mold won't grow unless you've got a steady moisture source and a food source. So the key to keeping mold out of your home is to keep your home clean and dry.

**GUPTA:** OK, good advice.

Like I said, lots of e-mails coming in.

Let's go straight to our next one.

Dee Dee in Philadelphia writes, "I found mold in our linen closet as well as in our food cabinet. The color of the mold was dark, almost black. I wiped it down with pure ammonia. I was told to put polyurethane on the moldy areas and continuously -- or continuously spray bleach. What's your suggestion?"

FELLMAN: Well, first of all, mold growing in a food cabinet would concern me quite a bit. You don't want mold growing anywhere in your house, obviously, but in the place where you keep your food is very concerning. Those two recommendations I don't like at all. Neither of those are the methods that would be recommended by, say, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Mold can be cleaned very effectively, believe it or not, with just some detergent and water. But ammonia shouldn't be used and under any circumstances mold should never be covered up. It shouldn't be painted over or use some sort of a coating to seal it in. It should be removed.

GUPTA: All right, are there any of those sort of mold fighting paints? Have you heard about those at all?

FELLMAN: Sure. There are paints that have anti-microbial chemicals built in and they're designed to resist mold growth. But they shouldn't be used to cover over mold. After a surface is cleaned, then it can be painted with such a product, which will resist mold growth for a certain period of time.

GUPTA: All right, it prevents the mold but it doesn't necessarily fight it, so make sure it's clean first.

Let's go to the other coast of the country now.

Don from Florida is joining us on the phone.

Welcome to House Call, Don.

Your question please?

DON: Hi.

My wife, my daughter and myself have all been, had like upper respiratory and sinus infections and we couldn't figure out what it was. So I went to the store and got a mold testing kit and I put it out and there's, it's growing mold. I mean I just put it out in the living room for like, for an hour like the instructions said, and there's three or four different kinds of mold growing in this Petri dish.

**GUPTA:** And, so, Glenn, if someone, you know, they buy these kits in the store. If it comes back positive, does this automatically mean that that's the cause of their respiratory problems?

**FELLMAN:** No, it doesn't, and consumers need to be very careful with those types of kits. Mold is everywhere. It's in the air we breathe and inside and outside. And if you put a dish out like that, you're going to get mold growth nearly regardless of what environment you're in.

You need to have someone come into your home who can do more specific types of testing and different types of testing if your family is really sick and you suspect it to be from mold.

**GUPTA:** OK, lost of valuable information here. Lots of questions coming in here.

When we come back, we want to talk about Hurricane Isabel. That put thousands of homes and businesses in danger for mold growth. We've got tips on how to clean up after major water damage like happened there.

Plus, how do you know if you're getting a qualified cleanup specialist? You're going to see all kinds of ads for this sort of thing. How do you know if you're getting the right thing?

All those answers when Weekend House Call continues.

All right, also, please call us with your questions. Our number, 1-800-807-2620, and our e-mail address, [housecall@cnn.com](mailto:housecall@cnn.com).

Let's check our Daily Dose health quiz now. After a leak or flood, how soon will mold start to grow if the area is not cleaned and dried properly?

Stay tuned for that answer.

## **COMMERCIAL**

**GUPTA:** All right, checking our health quiz now. After a leak or flood, how soon will mold start to grow? The answer, 24 to 48 hours. So the key, obviously, is to act quickly. Remove all water damaged materials, especially those soaked carpeting and ceiling tiles. Anything porous, in particular, should be thrown out.

This is Weekend House Call.

We're talking about mold cleanup.

**Hurricane Isabel flooded several cities on the Eastern Seaboard. We all remember that. We've got a question about that from Joe in Washington, D.C.**

**He writes, "Hurricane Isabel left me with some basement and first floor flooding. What can I do to keep mold from growing since I have allergies to mold spores?"**

**Glenn Fellman joins us on the television.**

**Welcome, Glenn.**

**FELLMAN: Hey, thank you.**

**GUPTA: How you doing?**

**FELLMAN: Very good.**

**GUPTA: Yes, we've got the bird back up and someone's in the teleport now. I'll explain that to you later. I just figured it out myself.**

**What do you say to someone like Joe from Washington, D.C.?**

**FELLMAN: Well, first of all, the most important thing is, as you said a few minutes ago, is to dry out the space very quickly, within 24 to 48 hours. There are species of mold that can start growing within 48 hours or more, and some which take a little bit longer. But the key is to get the home dry. And, also, to be very conscious of drying out places where there could be hidden moisture, like behind walls. Just to remove the carpet and maybe vacuum out the water isn't enough. You also have to make access holes into walls and bring in dehumidification equipment so that everything gets dried very quickly.**

**GUPTA: OK. From Hawaii to Florida, now to New York, Kevin in New York has a question for us, as well.**

**Welcome to House Call, Kevin.**

**KEVIN: Hi.**

**How are you?**

**GUPTA: Good morning.**

**Your question?**

**KEVIN:** We are in the process of having our house evaluated. We've actually already had the tests done to see if, in fact, we have mold in the house. We've gotten the results back. I'm interested, in retrospect, if we paid a fair amount, for one; of what tests need to be done, what's sort of over the top and unnecessary and how much it all should cost?

**GUPTA:** All right, so from one end of the spectrum to the other, Glenn. You've got these home kits and then you've got specialists actually coming in. What about costs for these sorts of things?

**FELLMAN:** That's a good question, Kevin.

In general, if you know you have a mold problem, if you can see it, if you can identify the water source and if no one in the home is sick, testing may not be necessary. The most important thing is to remove the mold. And as to the cost of testing services, there's a wide range depending on how much of the home is investigated and what types of testing they do.

But people should look at testing with a very conservative eye, really assess whether it's necessary. And, again, if you know the mold is there and no one is sick from it, your primary objective is to remove the mold and correct the problem that allowed water to enter the home in the first place. You do that and the mold won't come back.

**GUPTA:** OK, let's keep going right straight away with our e-mail questions now.

Franz from Indiana asking, "How effective is mold abatement? If a home has mold abatement, is the mold likely to come back?"

And I'll add to that, what is mold abatement, first of all? It sounds like Franz already knows what he's talking about here.

**FELLMAN:** Sure. Mold abatement, it's often referred to as mold remediation, is a process where mold is removed from the home. And while it's removed, safety steps are taken to protect mold from spreading to other areas of the home. They do this with polyethylene sheeting and making containment areas within the home.

Mold abatement or remediation is very effective. The technology to do that these days is really great.

**GUPTA:** OK, let's sort of keep with the same theme now and go to the sort of the middle of the country now.

D.J. from Missouri is on the phone.

**Welcome to House Call, D.J.**

**What's your question?**

**D.J.:** I recently moved from a town home and before moving I discovered that there was mold, a black mold that entirely covered the entire area underneath the sink, behind the dishwasher and down through the studs on the floor. And I pulled a section of the drywall off, put it in a plastic bag and I'm curious to know what do I do with this piece of drywall with the mold on it? How do I get it analyzed to determine whether it has been harmful? Because I've suffered from sinus and breathing problems and a number of other things, as did my roommate, throughout the two years that we were in the town home.

**GUPTA:** Really interesting. I mean, you know, I'll tell you, Glenn, as well, a lot of the questions that we're getting are along the same lines that D.J. is asking for.

**What do you say to someone like him?**

**FELLMAN:** Sure.

Well, first of all, there are many, many labs around the country that can analyze those samples and can tell you what's growing there. As a matter of fact, our organization, the Indoor Air Quality Association represents probably more than 30 or 40 labs around the country. We have over 2,000 members. Our Web site is [iaqa.org](http://iaqa.org). And if you go there, you can find several different labs who could possibly take a look at that and tell you what's growing.

**GUPTA:** And really quick, before we get to our next e-mail question, just give us a range again now, people are asking about this, about the cost of a cleanup project. I know all homes are different, all mold problems are different. But what sort of a range typically?

**FELLMAN:** It's so hard to say. If you have an isolated problem under a sink, let's say, in a kitchen from a pinhole leak, it may be a few hundred dollars to remediate the mold. But if you use the last caller's example, mold has now grown from that area down the wall into the floor below and spread out from there, the cleanup process is a destructive process. They have to take down drywall, remove carpeting, maybe even wood studs. And while that's happening, it's necessary to put containment devices up to protect the rest of the indoor environment from becoming contaminated.

It's a process that could take a few days, a lot of equipment, a lot of special

knowledge and labor. And so it can be very costly for a large mold project.

**GUPTA:** OK, and that takes us actually straight to our next e-mail question, which is also about the cost. Jean from Texas asking, "Why are insurance companies so reluctant to insure a home with a history of water damage, even if the water damage has been cleaned up according to the appropriate standards?"

So she's doing everything right, yet still getting a, having a hard time getting insurance.

**FELLMAN:** That's a great question. In our organization, we hear questions like that quite often. The problem that caused the water damage in the first place is what the insurance company is concerned about. If it was a structural problem, say a foundation problem in the home, regardless of how well the water was removed from the home, there's a chance for it to come back.

Insurance companies like to reduce their risk. That's what it's all about for them. And so if they have a property that's a known risk, they're not going to want to insure it because it's going to be a losing proposition for them.

**GUPTA:** OK. We're going to tackle another topic when we come back.

We're talking about children. Infants and children can be most affected by mold. A lot of people are curious about that. We're going to go over the symptoms to look for in your little ones. That's coming up.

Plus, we'll look at the newest weapon being unleashed in the hunt for mold.

## **COMMERCIAL**

**GUPTA:** This is one of my favorite parts of the show. Meet Putter and Sydney. They're beagles that work for a living sniffing out mold in homes and businesses in California. The dogs use their noses to detect mold hidden under floors and behind walls. The owner says the dogs are usually 90 percent accurate, if not more.

There are fewer than 20 mold dogs in the United States, but they've been used successfully in Europe for about 30 years. Cute dogs.

This is Weekend House Call and we are talking about mold. Mold exposure can cause severe reactions in infants, children and the elderly. Pregnant women and allergy and asthma sufferers can also be more susceptible. And people with compromised immune systems are at a higher risk of infection if they're also exposed to mold.

**We have a lot of questions about this from you, e-mails and phone calls.**

**First, let's go to an e-mail.**

**Mike in Boston says, "I have a fairly new house. The basement often smells moldy." That's not unusual. "How can I know if it's safe for my 3-year-old to play down there?"**

**A simple question.**

**Glenn Fellman, the executive director of the Indoor Air Quality Association, joining us.**

**What do you tell him? FELLMAN: That's a question that hits pretty close to home for me. I have a 3-year-old daughter and if you suspect that your basement has mold, it's not really a place that you're going to want your children to play, particularly because a child, a 3-year-old's breathing zone is about two to three feet off the floor. And if they're playing in a basement, they're most likely going to be sitting or laying on the floor.**

**If I was in that situation, I would have my basement checked out for mold before I would really let my child spend a lot of time down there. Especially look for sources of moisture and eliminate those.**

**GUPTA: You know, one thing, everyone goes down in their basement, it seems like everyone's basement smells a little bit moldy. I mean does everyone that's watching today, should they be worried about that? How do you know when to be worried?**

**FELLMAN: I've, I grew up on the East Coast, where a musty moldy smell in the basement was pretty common. You can find it quite a bit. And, no, you don't have to be overly concerned about it. If you find the source of moisture and if you put in some dehumidification equipment and do some cleaning, that odor could go away very quickly. And if it does, you don't have a problem, move on.**

**GUPTA: Yes, it's amazing, I got one of those dehumidifiers for my basement. It's amazing how much water it's actually pulling out of the air. Let's go straight to another phone caller now. We're sort of making our way around the United States and now to Toronto, as well.**

**Gavin from Toronto is joining us.**

**Welcome to Weekend House Call, Gavin.**

**GAVIN: How are you doing?**

**GUPTA: How are you doing?**

**Do you have a question?**

**GAVIN: Yes, the question is about air cleaners. I have an air cleaner with a HEPA filter on it and it claims to get rid of mold spores. And I'm just wondering how effective those filters are really in getting rid of mold?**

**FELLMAN: Very effective. A HEPA filter filters air down to an extremely fine level of quality. The thing you need to consider is how much space can that air cleaner handle. Typically, room air cleaners are designed just to handle one room. So if you're going to use an air cleaner to clean your entire house, that may not be effective, if it's a standalone unit that's just in the corner of a room.**

**GUPTA: OK, Glenn, we're going to take a quick break.**

**Everyone at home, grab some pen and paper. I'm going to give you some Web sites and phone numbers for more information on mold. All of that when we come back.**

**You are watching Weekend House Call.**

**COMMERCIAL**

**GUPTA: All right, we've had a great show.**

**If you want to read more about mold contamination and cleanup, check out our Web site. That's at [cnn.com/health](http://cnn.com/health). You're also going to find links to the EPA's Web site, as well. It's probably one of the best sites for answering your specific questions. You can go there directly. That's [epa.gov/aiq](http://epa.gov/aiq).**

**If you want to make a call instead, you can call 1-800-438-4318. We tried the numbers and the Web sites. They all work.**

**Glenn Fellman has been joining us from Chicago.**

**He's the executive director of the Indoor Air Quality Association.**

**Thanks so much.**

**Do you have a final thought for us today?**

**FELLMAN: Yes, I do.**

**Mold prevention really is fairly simple. Clean and dry is the key to keeping mold from your home. Don't allow moisture to come in. Regular good housekeeping practices should be maintained. If you do have a mold problem, if you're worried about it, you want to have someone come out and check it out or perhaps do some remediation, find a contractor who's qualified and trained and certified. Iaqa.org is a Web site where you can find nationwide directories of certified people who are very good at detecting and solving indoor air quality problems.**

**GUPTA: Glenn, thank you so much for joining us.**

**Your Cubs beat our Braves last night, you know?**

**FELLMAN: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.**

**GUPTA: You know, well, the other people in Chicago were not sorry to hear that.**

**Thank you and thanks to all of our viewers, as well, for calling and writing in with all of your questions.**

**Join us tomorrow, as well. We're going to be talking about a very important topic to all of us. It's about the uninsured in America, how many people have jobs but don't have health insurance. We're going to give you some practical tips on how to find health insurance and where you can go for your children, as well, to get medical treatment if you're uninsured. That's tomorrow at 8:30 Eastern, 5:30 Pacific. Thanks for watching.**

**I'm Dr. Sanjay Gupta.**

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