

Table 2: Sentinel conditions*

New onset asthma (especially in children)
 Frequent exacerbations of asthma
 Hypersensitivity pneumonitis
 Mucosal irritation
 Recurrent rhinitis/sinusitis
 Recurrent hoarseness

* consider a mould/moisture (or occupational) cause in the absence of an alternative explanation

Table 3: Questions to determine whether common non-specific symptoms are associated with a possible environmental cause?

1. What is your current occupation?
2. What are your current job and job tasks?
3. Do you notice any change in symptoms at home, work, school, or other particular environment?
4. Are symptoms associated with any particular activity or hobby?
5. Are you exposed to chemicals, fumes or dusts at work?
6. Are there areas of your home that have recurrent moisture problems?

Table 4: Environmental history questions (home)**

1. Do you have a humidifier or air conditioning and how frequently are they cleaned?
2. Is there wall-to-wall carpet in your bedroom?
3. Do you regularly see mould on tiles, ceilings, walls or floors in your bathroom?
4. Do you see mould on basement walls, ceilings or floor
5. Do you frequently smell a musty odour anywhere in your home?
6. Does your roof leak and if so how often?
7. Does the plumbing in your kitchen or bathroom leak and if so how often?
8. Are there wet spots anywhere in your home including the basement?
9. Do you see condensation on the inside of windows or other cold indoor surfaces?
10. Does anyone who lives at or regularly visits your home smoke tobacco indoors?

** similar questions may be asked about school or work

Environmental Interventions

If the answer to questions 1 through 9 in table 4 suggest there may be a moisture or mould contribution to the illness the following interventions should be considered:

- Refer to Healthy Homes if patient qualifies for assistance. (For details see <http://www.healthhb.co.nz/home/healthy-homes/>)
- For severe and progressing cases, remove patient from the environment.
- Advise patient on the need to rectify building (see Mould in our Homes pamphlet enclosed and available from the public health resource room tel 06 834 1815). If the home is rented the patient may find it helpful to have assistance in advising the landlord of the need for remediation.
- If patients do not meet criteria for Healthy Homes but require assistance, an environmental health officer from your local council may be able to provide advice. DHB Health protection staff may be able to assist council staff if required.
- For severe mould growth, professional mould remediation services are required. Attempts to remedy severe mould without protective equipment may exacerbate health problems.

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1. <http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/health-topics/environment-and-health/Housing-and-health/publications/2009/who-guidelines-for-indoor-air-quality-dampness-and-mould>

2. Howden-Chapman P, Saville-Smith K, Crane J, Wilson N. Risk factors for mold in housing: a national survey. *Indoor Air* 15: 469-76. 2005.