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## Mold Exposure in Infancy May Raise Asthma Risk



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### HEALTH

FRIDAY, Aug. 10 (HealthDay News) -- Infants exposed to certain types of mold are at greater risk for childhood asthma, according to a new study.

"This is strong evidence that indoor mold contributed to asthma development, and this stresses the urgent need for remediating water damage in homes, particularly in low-income urban areas where this is a common issue," the study's lead author, Tiina Reponen, a professor in the environmental health department at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine, said in a university news release.

In conducting the long-term study, researchers from the University of Cincinnati, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center followed the allergy development and respiratory health of nearly 300 infants. All of the infants had at least one parent with allergies.

The children were examined once a year for their first four years and reexamined when they turned 7 to determine if they had developed asthma.

During the study, the researchers also took the children's home environment into account to assess their exposure to allergens and mold. Water damage is the usual cause of indoor mold.

The study revealed 25 percent of children developed asthma by the time they were age 7. The only indoor contaminant identified as a risk factor for the condition was mold.

Using a DNA-based mold-analysis tool, the researchers found three particular types of mold were associated with the development of childhood asthma among the infants: *Aspergillus ochraceus*, *Aspergillus unguis* and *Penicillium variable*.

"Previous scientific studies have linked mold to worsening asthma symptoms, but the relevant mold species and their concentrations were unknown, making it difficult for public health officials to develop tools to effectively address the underlying source of the problem," Reponen said.

Based on the study's findings, Reponen added that treatments for asthma might be more effective if they target specific mold species.

The study is published in the August issue of the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*.

One in 10 U.S. children suffers from asthma, the researchers said.

#### More information

The U.S. National Institutes of Health provides more information on [asthma in children](#).

-- Mary Elizabeth Dallas

SOURCE: University of Cincinnati, news release, Aug. 2, 2012

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