

Frequently Asked Environmental Health Questions

Bed Bugs, Lead Poisoning, Mold, & Rabies



Bed Bugs

Q: What are Bed Bugs?

A: Bed Bugs are tiny insects that feed off human and animal blood, and live in close proximity to where people sleep.

Q: How Can I Avoid Bed Bugs?

A: The best way to avoid bed bug infestations is to regularly inspect your household furniture for bed bugs. The most common way of encountering bed bugs is while you're traveling. While traveling, it is important to inspect your hotel room before unpacking and to wash and inspect your luggage upon returning home.

Q: How can I identify Bed Bugs?

A: A bed bug is less than a half of an inch in length and reddish-brown in color as an adult while whitish-yellow as a child. However, after eating, a bed bug changes color to bright red. Most bed bugs can be found along mattress seams, behind bed boards, in ceiling/wall junctions, in couches, along baseboards, or in personal belongings.

Q: What do I do if I have identified bed bugs?

A: Contact a Pest Management Professional in your county.

Lead Poisoning

Q: What is Lead Poisoning and who is susceptible?

A: Lead poisoning is a preventable disease caused by exposure to lead in paint, water, soil, or other lead hazards. Young children are most susceptible, more so if living in a home built before 1978. It is important to have children tested for elevated blood lead levels by their doctor.

Q: What are the symptoms of Lead Poisoning?

A: Most individuals exposed do not develop symptoms immediately. Some early symptoms may include stomach aches or poor appetite. The long-term effects of lead exposure in children may include slow development, learning disabilities, hearing loss, reduced height, or hyperactivity.

Q: How can I prevent Lead Poisoning, and how is it treated?

A: Washing hands, eating a good diet, and keeping a clean home, including removing peeling paint and keeping dust to a minimum, can help prevent lead exposure. Low levels of lead exposure can be treated by removing the source of lead, however high levels of lead exposure require medical treatment.

Q: What do I do if a child has been exposed to lead?

A: Have the child tested for elevated blood lead levels and contact their doctor.

Mold

Q: What is mold and how do I know if it is present in my home?

A: Molds are types of fungi that grow when high humidity or a lot of moisture are present in temperatures over 65°. Mold can be identified as small spots scattered over a surface, with a slick or slimy texture and musty or mildew smell, that will increase in number and size over time.

Q: Where does mold come from and is it dangerous?

A: Mold becomes active and starts to grow in environments with high levels of humidity or moisture, and temperatures over 65°. Molds cause different reactions in different people. Some people may have no reaction, some may have allergic reactions, and some may become ill. To protect your health, it is best to be exposed to as little mold as possible.

Q: How do I get rid of mold?

A: While cleaning mold, cover yourself with gloves, goggles, and a mask to avoid any allergic reactions. It is important to fix the water problem so the mold doesn't come back, and then clean up the mold. To clean mold off hard surfaces use detergent and water first, then for walls and ceilings use mildew surface cleaner, and for hardwood floors or woodwork use phosphate cleaning solutions. Other materials may need to be thrown out. If you have any questions or need to hire someone to clean the mold contact a cleaning professional in your area. The cleaning items can be found at any hardware store.

Mold Services:

Servpro of Hanover, Goochland and Caroline 804-730-6788
Servpro of New Kent, Williamsburg and Northern Neck 804-966-1400

Rabies

Q: What is rabies and how is it transmitted?

A: Rabies is a deadly disease caused by a virus that can be found in rabid animals, both wild and domestic, that attacks the nervous system. It can be transmitted through saliva or brain tissue of a rabid animal. Saliva or brain tissue can be transmitted into humans through a bite, preexisting wounds, the eye or the mouth.

Q: What do I do if I believe my animal has been exposed to rabies?

A: Isolate your animal and call animal control, then call your local health department.
Animal Control: Charles City: 804-966-9500, Goochland County 804-556-5302,
Hanover County: 804-365-6140, New Kent County: 804-652-4745

Q: What do I do if I believe I have been exposed to a potentially rabid animal?

A: Clean and wash the wound thoroughly, call your doctor immediately, then call animal control and your local health department.