



Baden-Württemberg

REGIERUNGSPRÄSIDIUM STUTT GART



Newsletter

WHO Collaborating Centre for Housing and Health
State Health Office



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Editorial

Damp Indoor Spaces and Health

The quality of living space plays an important role for human health in a variety of ways. Over the past few years, dampness and mould infestation were shown to have a significant impact on well-being and health. While this type of damage to buildings has been known for centuries, comparatively little research has been done on this problem. There is a scarcity of data due to deficits in detecting, identifying and assessing the exposure parameters as well as the health problems which can arise from dampness and indoor mould. The mechanisms of pathogenesis associated with mould infestation and the various components of mould (spores, cell wall components, extracellular polysaccharides) as well as metabolites (MVOC, mycotoxins) or bacterial endotoxins are largely unknown. The technical capabilities of detecting these in indoor air and dust still are quite limited, and have often not been validated scientifically. Furthermore, the dearth of knowledge about interactions between single substances and groups thereof with other indoor toxins as well as differing susceptibilities of the occupants limits assessment. It is therefore not currently possible to properly assess the health risk posed by indoor dampness and mould damage or lay down threshold or target values for the health burden posed by indoor mould.

Despite the vast profusion of studies on the health hazards resulting from exposure to mould, data on this problem remain scarce. Compared to the great number of studies on the possible health hazards, the number of studies on the efficacy of different methods of mould removal and prevention of (renewed) infestation is considerably smaller. While the possibilities for damage prevention which occupants or construction companies have are basically known, theoretical and practical assessment of their interaction and the legal situation remain the subject of great controversy. Hence, in spite of many official guidelines for health protection, the type and quality of mould removal services rendered by professional companies can vary greatly, and quality assurance regarding determination, assessment and sanitation

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of mould damage need to be optimised and implemented further. Moreover, there are considerable differences between the various national guidelines for mould removal and prevention. Likewise, mould damage prevention guidelines for construction can vary greatly from one country to another, and not only due to differences in climate.

In view of the considerable deficits in research and application as well as the complexity of the damage caused by mould and dampness, further interdisciplinary research is needed to close the gaps. Directed and coordinated research is essential to cross-link existing knowledge in the various fields and systematically develop it further. These fields include epidemiology and environmental medicine; toxicology and allergology; mycology and microbiology; the biology and physics of construction; architecture and construction planning; preservation and sanitation of buildings; as well as professional technique and laboratory methods. Last but not least, we have the vital task of further implementing the available data on prevention of damage caused by dampness and mould; e.g., isolating buildings properly, making them more energy-efficient and using environmentally sound ventilation technology.

The challenge for public health lies in developing and implementing preventive measures, which are specific for different groups of occupants (social status, increased susceptibility, age, etc.) and integrate both behaviour prevention and settings-oriented factors.

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Network Mould Counselling Baden-Württemberg

During the last 10 years, basic conditions for an appropriate action in case of mould in indoor environments have improved considerably in Germany. Criteria to assess the hygienic impact of mould-related damage as well as validated methods to detect mould have been established, an external system for quality assurance has been set up and guidelines for mould remediation have been developed. Nevertheless, the appearance of mould in indoor environments often leads to mutual blame allocation ending in a judicial dispute, and the discussion frequently becomes unobjective. To leave this dispute as a winner, arguments are used which are little or not concerned with the present damage. Questions of tenancy law or health are linked to the problem of appropriate abolishment of the present mould in indoor environments. Many service providers put upon of the insecurity of persons who are affected by mould in indoor environments by offering them services, which are not appropriate and too expensive. Therefore criteria to assess the reliability of service providers are needed. In Baden-Württemberg, a federal state in the southwest of Germany, representatives of tenant and landlord organisations, remediation companies, diagnosticians for interior spaces and the public health service have affiliated to a "Network Mould Counselling". Their intention is to contribute to the objectification of the mould problem. This network has released a publication on the following topics:



- Necessary activities in case of mould in indoor environments
- Competent assessment of mould in indoor environments
- Microbiological investigation
- Mould remediation
- Advice on health topics
- Advice on questions concerning law and insurance law
- Prevention of mould in indoor environments
- Literature and useful addresses

The document "Netzwerk Schimmelpilzberatung Baden-Württemberg", that describes this network in more detail can be downloaded from

<http://www.gesundheitsamt-bw.de/servlet/PB/menu/1232734/index.html?ROOT=1133583>

 German only)

Literature

In this section we will provide a collection of recent housing and health publications from a variety of backgrounds. Literature that is published in German and French, respectively, is indicated with the German flag  and the French flag .

If you have suggestions for interesting journals that we should screen for the literature collection, please let us know!

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Allergies and Respiratory Diseases

[Berg J, McConnell R, Milam J, Galvan J, Kotlerman J, Thorne P, Jones C, Ferdman R, Eggleston P, Rand C, Lewis MA, Peters J, Richardson J.](#)

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J Urban Health. 2008 Jan;85(1):52-61.

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Allergol Immunopathol (Madr). 2007 Nov-Dec;35(6):243-7.

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Environ Health Perspect. 2007 Nov;115(11):1665-9.

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Chest. 2007 Nov;132(5 Suppl):782S-788S. Review.

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Pediatr Allergy Immunol. 2008 Jan 12.

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Allergy. 2007 Dec;62(12):1387-93.

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J Trop Pediatr. 2007 Oct;53(5):319-24.

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Supplement 2 / November 2007

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WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women.
Initial results on prevalence, health outcomes and women's responses.

Event Announcements

In this section we will inform you about upcoming events with relevance to housing and health. If you know of any international event, please let us know!

Built and Human Environment, 8th International Postgraduate Research Conference

Date: June 26 - 27, 2008

Venue: Prague, Czech Republic

Further Information: <http://www.ipgrc.buhu.salford.ac.uk/Whole.htm>

Benefits and Risks of Inhaled Engineered Nanoparticles

Date: June 11 - 14, 2008

Venue: Hannover, Germany

Further Information: <http://www.inis-symposium.com/>

The 4th IET International Conference on Intelligent Environments (IE 08)

Date: July 21 - 22, 2008

Venue: University of Washington, Seattle, USA

Further Information: <http://conferences.theiet.org/ie08/>

The 11th International Conference on Indoor Air Quality and Climate

Date: August 17 - 22, 2008

Venue: Copenhagen, Denmark

Further Information: <http://www.indoorair2008.org/>

XXXVI IAHS World Congress on Housing Science

Date: November 3 - 7, 2008

Venue: Kolkata, India

Further Information: <http://www.housingscience2008.in/index.php>

53. gmds-Jahrestagung

Date: September 15 - 19, 2008

Venue: Stuttgart, Germany

Further Information: <http://www.gmds2008.de/>

2. Jahrestagung Gesellschaft für Hygiene, Umweltmedizin und Präventivmedizin (GHUP)

Date: October 1 - 4, 2008

Venue: Graz, Austria

Further Information: <http://conventus.de/ghup2008/>

20th Conference of the International Society for Environmental Epidemiology

Date: October 12 - 16, 2008

Venue: Pasadena, California, USA

Further Information: <http://secure.awma.org/events/isee-isea/>

16th European Conference on Public Health

Date: November 6 - 8, 2008

Venue: Lisbon, Portugal

Further Information: <http://www.healthinnovation2008.com.pt/site.asp?ID=1&IDIOMA=2>

Message Board

In this section we will inform you about activities and projects related to housing and health that are being carried out by WHO or the WHO-CC. This may relate to ongoing activities and projects, as well as invitations to participate in data collections or case study projects.

WHO work on dampness and mould

Dampness and mould in indoor environments are recognized as a significant health hazard related to a wide range of health effects. Still, the practical implementation of actions to reduce, mitigate or prevent dampness and mould remains a difficult area for public health caused by the diversification of indoor spaces, the fragmentation of responsibilities and, in case of homes, the limited mandate of public authorities for interventions.

WHO actions in the field of dampness and mould in built settings are now a main part of the working agenda of the WHO European Center for Environment and Health in Bonn. A first task is the development of WHO Indoor Air Quality Guidelines for Dampness, Mould and Ventilation, which have been discussed and suggested by an expert meeting of scientists in October 2007. The suggested recommendations are part of the meeting report (<http://www.euro.who.int/Document/E91146.pdf>). The suggested guidelines are currently being reviewed and the associated evidence background is summarized for publication of the guidelines in mid-2008.

The WHO Guidelines on Dampness, Mould and Ventilation are being developed as a part of a larger project on WHO Indoor Air Quality Guidelines which will also address allergens, selected chemical pollutants and indoor combustion in the near future. For further information on the IAQ Guidelines, a meeting report on the development of such guidelines is available at http://www.euro.who.int/air/activities/20070510_2.

Next to the development of guidelines, WHO has addressed risk management activities for dampness and mould prevention and remediation through a project to identify and assess interventions undertaken to reduce, mitigate or prevent dampness and mould in built environments. 21 case studies from developed countries with modern building stocks were collected to review and assess the practical actions and interventions undertaken to address or prevent health-relevant problems of dampness and mould. The main conclusions of an expert review committee are that there is a lack of knowledge on the quality and success of practical mitigation strategies, and that there is yet little accumulated evidence on health benefits of actions carried out in the built environment.

Key conclusions were derived from the discussion of those case studies and illustrate good practice elements and approaches from

- a scientific perspective (is there scientific evidence on successful interventions against dampness and mould?)
- a technical perspective (what interventions and actions are suitable to reduce or prevent dampness and mould?) and
- a process-related perspective (which actors have what responsibilities and what processes have been proven as effective?)

The meeting report as well as the case studies discussed will be available for download on http://www.euro.who.int/Housing/activities/20071218_1 in mid-May, and will be – together with additional evidence on national approaches, policy relevance and existing regulations – a background document for an upcoming WHO expert meeting on the policy implication on interventions against dampness and mould in early 2009.

Next to these projects directly focused at the health relevance of indoor dampness and mould, a variety of other WHO activities deal with healthy indoor environments and specifically the indoor air quality problems in relation to health, among these for example the initiative of

WHO Headquarter (Geneva) to assess and quantify the burden of disease of indoor air pollution and specifically the use of solid fuels on national levels (see http://www.who.int/indoorair/publications/indoor_air_national_burden_estimate_revised.pdf) or the assessment of the national health impacts from the three major global environmental risk factors 'unsafe water, sanitation & hygiene', 'indoor air pollution from solid fuel use' and 'outdoor air pollution' (http://www.who.int/quantifying_ehimpacts/countryprofiles/en/index.html), which largely relate to the indoor setting.

With such activities, WHO increasingly considered the relevance of indoor spaces as a health determinant. The WHO Collaborating Centre for Housing and Health has in similar ways addressed the indoor conditions of buildings, and carried out a variety of activities on mould and indoor environments, for example:

- Implementation of interlaboratory comparisons on the topics „Differentiation of Mould in Indoor Environments and in Food“ and „Drawing of Germ Samples in the Air“
- Continuing education courses on evidence and differentiation of mould and on evidence and assessment of biological exposure in indoor environments
- Continuing education courses on mould remediation for craftsmen
- Implementation of the research project “Investigation on the Appearance and Health Impact of Bacteria in Indoor Environments”
- Release of the publications “Network Mould Counselling Baden-Württemberg” (see page 2) and “Mould in Indoor Environments - Differentiation and Assessment” (both in German)

In addition, the WHO-CC is involved in an environmental health surveillance system on fourth-graders conducted by sentinel county health offices in Baden-Württemberg with a set of questions targeted at the housing environment of these children.

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