

Is Your Humidifier Contaminating Your Indoor Air with Mold, Viruses, & Bacteria?



As the winter months' pass, many people turn to a portable humidifier to combat seasonal household dryness and to increase the overall humidity level inside of their home. What many people do not know is that humidifiers can make you and your family sick by introducing harmful viruses, bacteria, and toxic molds into your home air. Both the federal Consumer Product Safety Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency warn that emissions from dirty humidifiers can cause health problems, especially for people who suffer from asthma or allergies.

Your humidifier might look normal to the naked eye, but if you could see inside of the machine you may be surprised by how much mold and yeast have accumulated. Accumulation often occurs on the vent, fan blades, or inside of the water tank. While you may not be able to see harmful mold spores on the surfaces inside of your humidifier, they can still contaminate your home air.

Another danger of using a humidifier inside of your home is a direct result of the increase of moisture you are introducing to your home air. Excessive wetness or humidity can cause mold to start growing on porous surfaces such as windowsills and walls. Moisture will accumulate on numerous surfaces inside of your home and can cause mold to grow quickly.

Household humidifiers connected to a HVAC system also require proper maintenance and monitoring. Only use a portable humidifier if a physician recommends one to provide you with symptomatic relief. If you must use a portable humidifier inside of your home, it is

important to take some precautions. Use a digital hygrometer to monitor the humidity level inside of your home. According to the Mayo Clinic, the recommended average relative humidity level for a home is between 30% and 50%. Humidity below this level can cause dry sinuses, bloody noses, and dry itchy skin and eyes.

When using a humidifier, clean your unit on a daily basis and only use distilled or demineralized water. Tap water contains minerals that can create deposits inside your humidifier that promote bacterial growth. Change filters regularly. Some newer models of humidifiers do not contain a disposable filter. If your humidifier uses a filter, make sure you change it regularly. If possible, discontinue humidifier use when your

symptoms go away. Finally, avoid setting up your humidifier against a wall, close to windowsills, or adjacent to any porous objects prone to mold.