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## Study: Damp Homes Increase Children's Risk of Nasal Allergies

By [Alyssa Sparacino](#) Jul 30th 2010 1:29PM



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Damp homes with water damage are breeding grounds for allergens, and new research says children who live in these environments are more likely to develop nasal [allergies](#), [Reuters Health reports](#).

A research team in Finland followed almost 1,900 children for six years and found that 16 percent of children whose parents reported dampness in the house were diagnosed with allergic rhinitis, compared to 12 percent of children whose homes were not reported as damp.

In this case, dampness in the house was classified as visible signs of water damage to the ceilings, walls or floors, and visible mold or mold odor.

Lead researcher Dr. Jouni Jaakkola, of the Institute of Health Sciences in Oulu, Finland, tells Reuters Health that asthma and [allergies](#) are often more prevalent in low-income families, so he and his team accounted for other factors like socioeconomic status and exposure to [secondhand smoke](#).

The link between damp conditions and nasal allergies held true, however, and the findings showed children whose homes had [mold](#) or water damage at the end of the six years were 55 percent more likely than other children to suffer from allergies associated with any allergen.

Dr. Clifford Bassett, fellow of the [College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology](#) and assistant clinical professor of medicine at Long Island College Hospital SUNY, tells AOL Health that environment does play a significant role in the onset of allergies, but "basically the immune system is the same whether you live in Finland or in New York City."

He [stresses](#) that determining a patient's "allergic fingerprint," which is the patient's likelihood of developing particular allergies, depends largely on two aspects: environment and [genetics](#).

"If one parent has an allergy, the chance of a child developing that same allergy is 20 to 30 percent, and it increases to 50 to 70 percent if both parents have allergies," Bassett tells AOL Health. "Genetics are an overly important factor. Even if you live in a house with mildew, if you don't have the allergic fingerprint, you won't ever develop the allergy."

Jaakkola tells Reuters Health that his study is the first to look at the cause and effect possibilities of these indoor environments and allergies over a longer period of time, as previous work has made it difficult to confirm whether the exposure to dampness actually resulted in allergy development.

Bassett tells AOL Health that though this study doesn't prove a chain of events, moist conditions like this encourage the growth of allergens like mold and mildew and the most common -- [dust mites](#).

"They have a field day when you increase humidity," Bassett says. "And mold in general is something that can cause a variety of allergies as well as [asthma](#)."

Jaakkola suggests that parents be aware of water damage in the home and take the necessary steps to fix the problem to create a safer environment for the entire family.

Bassett says that dehumidifiers and air filters can help reduce a families' exposure to indoor and outdoor allergens, but he suggests patients and doctors come up with an action plan.

"This is five or six different plans dealing with three areas: modification of environment, which also includes avoidance education," Bassett tells AOL Health. "Then [medications](#), both over the counter and prescription. And finally, allergy shots or immunotherapy for people who don't do well on drugs or have [asthma](#)."

To take a quiz on allergy and asthma relief and find an allergist near you, visit the ACAAI's [AllergyandAsthmaRelief.org](http://AllergyandAsthmaRelief.org).

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