



**Dr. Andrea Winquist** is a medical epidemiologist (MD/PhD) with interests in environmental health and health disparities. Her recent work has focused on health effects of air pollution and health effects of perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) in a community exposed as a result of PFOA releases from a chemical plant. She has recently worked on a survey of residents of the English Avenue and Vine City neighborhoods of Atlanta relating to flooding, damp indoor environments, mold and related health conditions. Prior to coming to Emory, Dr. Winquist worked as a medical epidemiologist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and at the Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Public Health.

## Discussion Notes

Indoor air pollution is a broad intersection of health, allergens, pests, and asthma. Different people have different disease-causing triggers. A major contributor to indoor air pollution, especially in Atlanta, is mold. Mold can initiate the development of asthma and eczema, and people with weak immune systems or diabetes are more prone to such ailments and to mold infections. The key to finding mold in homes is to find wet spots and the source of water, and then dry the area immediately. Mold growth can be prevented by controlling humidity through AC and heating or a dehumidifier. Use bathroom fans when you shower and exhaust fans on your stove when you cook.

Mold may also be cleaned with bleach, soap and water, or ammonia. Never mix bleach and ammonia—they create a toxic gas.

## TAKE-HOME POINTS

**Common indoor air pollutants include radon, tobacco smoke, mold, cooking fuels, household chemicals and others.**

**Mold is related to moisture. Water damaged areas can grow mold if not dried within 24-48 hours.**

**Mold can cause asthma exacerbations, other respiratory problems and eczema (a type of skin rash).**

**Asthma triggers are different for different people, and can include smoke, other air pollutants, mold, pollen, cockroaches, and many other environmental factors.**

## KEY WORDS

**Mold:** Fungi that are found throughout the environment and grow well in damp areas.

**Radon:** A radioactive gas that can enter homes from the ground, and that can lead to lung cancer.

**Asthma:** A chronic lung condition that involves coughing, chest tightness, wheezing and shortness of breath, and is made worse by various triggers, which are different for different people.