

Controlling Moisture in Your Home

Handout 2

- Fix leaks and seepage. If water is entering the house from the outside, your options range from simple landscaping to extensive excavation and waterproofing. (The ground should slope away from the house.) Water in the basement can result from the lack of gutters or a water flow toward the house. Water leaks in pipes or around tubs and sinks can provide a place for biological pollutants to grow.
- Put a plastic cover over dirt in crawlspaces to prevent moisture from coming in from the ground. Be sure crawlspaces are well-ventilated.
- Use exhaust fans in bathrooms and kitchens to remove moisture to the outside (not into the attic). Vent your clothes dryer to the outside.
- Turn off certain appliances (such as humidifiers or kerosene heaters) if you notice moisture on windows and other surfaces.
- Use dehumidifiers and air conditioners, especially in hot, humid climates, to reduce moisture in the air, but be sure the appliances themselves don't become sources of biological pollutants.
- Raise the temperature of cold surfaces where moisture condenses. Use insulation or storm windows. (A storm window installed on the inside works better than one installed on the outside.) Open doors between rooms (especially doors to closets which may be colder than the rooms) to increase circulation. Circulation carries heat to the cold surfaces. Increase air circulation by using fans and by moving furniture from wall corners to promote air and heat circulation. Be sure your house has a source of fresh air and can expel excessive moisture from the home.
- Pay special attention to carpet on concrete floors. Carpet can absorb moisture and serve as a place for biological pollutants to grow. Use area rugs which can be taken up and washed often. In certain climates, if carpet is to be installed over a concrete floor, it may be necessary to use a vapor barrier (plastic sheeting) over the concrete and cover that with subflooring (insulation covered with plywood) to prevent a moisture problem.
- Moisture problems and their solutions differ from one climate to another. The South is hot and wet. In hot regions, the use of air conditioners which cool the air too quickly may prevent the air conditioners from running long enough to remove excess moisture from the air. The types of construction and weatherization can lead to different problems and solutions.

Prepared by Russ Kennedy, Ph.D., M.B.A., M.P.H., CHES, CSCS, Assistant Professor - Health and Aging Specialist, University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, rkennedy@uaex.edu.