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Mold Worries

How To Test Your Home For Mold



May 8 — Scientists tell us mold is everywhere but recently there's been a lot of media attention about so-called 'toxic mold.' Because of that attention, there are a lot of mold home test kits on the market. *7 On Your Side* tests the test kits.

Oreo is no ordinary dog. She's one of 18 mold-sniffing dogs in the United States. Oreo and her owner, Jason Earl, work in Philadelphia and charge \$400 an hour to look for mold.

Harmful mold can exist behind walls and underneath counters. Invisible mold spores can contaminate the air in your home.

For those of us who don't have a mold-sniffing dog, there are over the counter products sold to detect mold.

One kit was bought at a hardware store, and another test kit, which came in a box, was bought on the Internet. Both contained what scientists called 'settling plates,' commonly known as petri dishes.

To test their accuracy we also used a scientific air sampler rented from Forensic Analytical, an East Bay laboratory that processes hundreds of mold tests every month.

After carefully following the directions, we left the kits in an ABC7 conference room.

John Watson, mold expert: "Even if you took an outdoor sample, chances are you'd find higher levels than what you did in your conference room. So, you guys probably have a pretty good filtration system. It's a clean place."

Forensic Analytical's John Watson, was somewhat surprised by the results.

The petri dishes and the professional sampler found roughly the same low levels of mold, not enough, he says, to cause any health problems.

So should you try to use the tests at home?

Well, ours worked very well, but if you are truly concerned with either property value or your health, hire a professional — either Oreo or one of her human colleagues.

Friday, May 09, 2003

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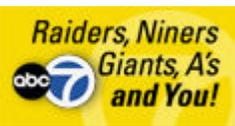
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John Watson, mold expert: "If you're looking for a more thorough investigation of what's in the air, what's in the walls, about how extensive is the damage, where's the water intrusion coming from, you really need to call an industrial hygienist."

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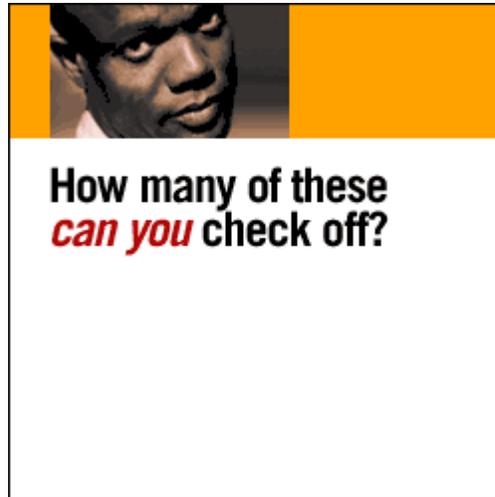
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