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Are You Getting Sick Too Often In Your Home?

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A weekly question/answer column

Are You Getting Sick Too Often In Your Home?

Leona Hawks answers:*

Sickness this time of year may be aggravated or caused by some of these indoor air pollutants.

- **Poor Air Quality** - This is common in homes with inadequate ventilation and super-insulated homes because indoor air pollutants stay trapped inside the house. Open windows, purchase a mechanical ventilation system with an air-to-air heat exchanger that pulls stale warm air from the house and transfers the heat to the fresh air being pulled in from outside, or, use an air filtration unit that absorbs, captures and dissolves pollutants.
- **Carbon Monoxide** - This colorless, odorless gas is a combustion pollutant that comes from burning fuels such as natural or liquid propane, fuel oil, kerosene, wood or coal. Have your house tested by the fuel company, or purchase a carbon monoxide monitor at hardware or retail stores. Natural gas leaks have a distinctive odor. The fuel company can also test for this.
- **Mold Spores** - These grow in areas with excess moisture such as bathrooms, crawl spaces, basements, kitchens, laundry areas, or where too many people or pets occupy a small space. Mold often collects in ducts after summer and becomes airborne once the heating system starts working. This makes it common for people to get colds as the heating season begins. To prevent spore growth, keep air ducts clean, use ventilating fans in kitchen and bathroom areas, vent clothes dryers outside or install a dehumidifier.
- **Asbestos** - This mineral fiber used as a fire retardant is associated with lung cancer and asbestosis, a disease which scars the lungs. If you suspect the presence of asbestos in your home, leave it alone and contact a professional asbestos removal company immediately.

* Leona Hawks is Utah State University Extension Home Management Specialist