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Is There a Killer In Your Bathroom? *Bath Enclosures Can Prevent Growth of Deadly Mold*

TOPEKA, KS. September 7, 2001 — Sure, bath enclosures keep water in the shower, and increase the value and beauty of a home, but can they really save your life? When it comes to preventing the growth of the toxic mold *Stachybotrys*, the answer is an emphatic “Yes.”

Exposure to *Stachybotrys* can cause a number of health problems, ranging from sore throat, allergies and skin rashes, to asthma, pulmonary hemorrhage and central nervous system problems. The mold has become so pervasive in businesses and homes across the country that public health officials are now referring to the spread of *Stachybotrys* as an epidemic.

Stachybotrys grows on water-damaged wood and paper products. One of the most common areas of the home where *Stachybotrys* grows is around the shower.

This is where the advantages of a bath enclosure versus a shower curtain become evident. A correctly installed bath enclosure forms a watertight barrier that prevents any water from getting on the floor and walls during a shower. Shower curtains, unlike bath enclosures, can gap at the sides, allowing water to leak onto the floor and walls. Over time, continued leakage provides the perfect breeding ground for the deadly *Stachybotrys* mold.

“When it comes to keeping water off of the bathroom floor, there really is no comparison between a bath enclosure and a shower curtain,” said Spike Knadler, president of the Bath Enclosure Manufacturers Association. “A bath enclosure prevents the kind of water damage that can occur when shower curtains gap, and over time, can save homeowners a tremendous amount of time and money in repairs.”

Not only does *Stachybotrys* contribute to health problems, it can also be extremely costly to eradicate. Only qualified experts should conduct abatement of medium- and large-scale infestations of *Stachybotrys*. And, at its worst, *Stachybotrys* mold has been so dangerous and difficult to remove, homes and offices have been abandoned and destroyed.

“Mold spores are literally everywhere waiting for a nice level of moisture to set up and grow,” said Dr. Joseph Ponessa, a housing and energy specialist at Rutgers University. “Severe cases of mold contamination can happen, and that’s when health problems occur.”

Ponessa, who specializes in indoor environmental health, emphasizes that mold contamination must be dealt with promptly to avoid health problems. “If you have a mold problem, you need to solve it,” said Ponessa. “The best diagnostic tool for determining if an indoor pollutant is causing physical symptoms is if, when you leave the home, the symptoms leave, too.” The best way to prevent mold growth, Ponessa maintains, is through moisture control. “The most important step in inhibiting mold contamination is to manage and control water and moisture problems,” he said.

One simple way to ensure that a bathroom stays free of water damage is to replace a shower curtain with a bath enclosure.

As the only trade association of its kind, BEMA assists consumers in the purchase, installation and maintenance of bath enclosure products and services. It has 49 member organizations with 62 locations throughout North America.

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