



## The Top Five Hidden Dangers in Your Home



**1. Mold/Mildew**—Living in Florida means two things: heat and humidity. If you don't keep them in check, you get mold/mildew. Bathrooms and closets are favorite hiding places due to high moisture and lack of ventilation. If you cannot see it, the “musty” odor is another sign. It can grow in 24-48 hours, so if your home/carpet is flooded, you must act quickly. Keep things clean and dry with relative humidity (RH) below 62% to stop all chances for growth.

**2. Dust Mites**—You cannot see them with the naked eye, but they are everywhere! They are one of the most common causes of asthma/allergies. They like moisture and feed on dead skin cells our bodies shed. Their favorite hiding places are in our beds (pillows, sheets, mattresses). Wash your bedding at least once a week in hot (120-degree F.) water, dry, and use allergy covers. Things that aren't washable (a favorite pillow/ stuffed animal) can be covered and placed in the freezer for a few hours. Regularly vacuum all floors, especially carpet.

**3. Off-gassing**—That “new carpet smell” may be more than you think, providing a harmful gas and a major headache if you are sensitive to the fumes. Paints can give off volatile organic compounds (VOCs), too. Formaldehyde used in particle board furniture and cabinets can be very strong. Other products to watch are paint strippers/other solvents; wood preservatives; aerosol sprays; cleansers/disinfectants; moth repellents; air fresheners; stored fuels; automotive products; hobby supplies; dry-cleaned clothing. The smell usually goes away in a few days or weeks (some, never) but it would be a lot safer and easier to purchase products that are off-gassing free!

**4. Household Chemicals/Medicines**—There are many look-a-likes that resemble beverages or candies that would interest children or confuse adults and lead to disaster. Store chemicals and medicines out of the reach of children; keep products in their original container; and have the number for the **Poison Information Center 1-800-222-1222** by your phone in case of emergency.

**5. Carbon Monoxide**—This colorless, odorless gas can be deadly; yet, you may not know it is present without a detector. Generally, the danger comes from fuel-burning appliances such as furnaces, stoves, fireplaces, clothes dryers, water heaters, space heaters, as well as automobile exhaust in an attached garage. Make sure that all appliances are installed correctly and properly vented. Never leave your car idling in the garage. Buy and install a carbon monoxide detector.