

7 News Investigations: Dust Mite Misery

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When you think of moisture problems at home, mold is probably the first thing that comes to mind. But there's another intruder that may be even more sickening, and now some homeowners are suing. Investigative reporter Carmel Cafiero with this exclusive report "Dust Mite Misery."

WSVN -- After soaking South Florida rains there is a four letter word that homeowners fear most, mold, but now some experts say it may not be what is making many people sick the creepy culprit microscopic dust mites.

Maurice Baum: "The main trigger for the health related issues is number one, is the dust mite, and second, the mold allergies."

Maurice Baum is an industrial hygienist, he says dust mites thrive in warm and humid environments.

Maurice Baum: "When the moisture is increased, the dust mites are going to proliferate and they are going to increase. It's probably I would say 100 times worse."

Dust mites feed on our dead skin cells, but Baum says allergies can be triggered after

people inhale the mites' waste too many mites can make some people very sick.

Lorena Rodriguez: "You are fighting against something you can't even see."

Jose and Lorena Rodriguez say their family started to get sick just weeks after moving into their brand new Boynton Beach home. There was coughing, rashes, hives and worse.

Lorena Rodriguez: "Even the eardrums kept bursting all the time. We run to the emergency room with blood running down their ears. My face looked like a monster for a whole year. I didn't know what was happening."

An allergy test revealed Lorena was allergic to dust mites. She claims her house was right for an infestation because water was leaking into her home and she never knew it.

Jose Rodriguez: "It was a nightmare, it was a nightmare."

Attorney Scott Gelfand is representing the Rodriguez family and has filed this lawsuit on their behalf.

Scott Gelfand: "I believe that this is a growing area of the law."

Gelfand has sued numerous builders over mold in the past claiming their negligence allowed water to get into homes but this time, he is also suing for dust mite invasions.

Scott Gelfand: "We began to notice that a lot of our clients, were testing allergically positive for dust mites, in as much if not greater amounts than they were testing positive for mold."

The builders in the Rodriguez case have denied fault, but Gelfand says he thinks the blame is clear.

Scott Gelfand: "If water gets in there, it creates conditions which are conducive to the dust mite growth, and anyone who causes that situation, is legally responsible for it."

It may ultimately be up to a jury to decide whether builders are to blame for some people's "Dust Mite Misery."

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