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Your Nose Knows When Your Green Home is Sick

Posted on 26. Dec, 2011 by [Maryruth Belsey Priebe](#) in [Articles](#)

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Did you know that many house-related health problems – whether it’s a conventional house or a [green house plan](#) – can be sniffed out with your nose? Yup, your sniffer might just be the best advantage you have for discovering that your home is creating health problems for you and your family.

Though many of these problems are more common in older houses where plumbing, ventilation, and building materials are at fault, even an eco-friendly house design can experience problems like poor [indoor air quality due to ventilation problems](#). Regardless of how your home was designed, keep your smelling sensor well-tuned for problems that smell like this:

- **Musty smells:** You know that moist, moldy smell you may sense when you walk into a basement? More than likely this musty smell is the result of excess moisture that could be creating mold in your walls and floors. The problem is usually poor drainage and lack of vapor barriers for damp walls

and floors, though it can also mean air leakage from the basement on to other floors. In addition to improving drainage and vapor barriers, you may need to add a dehumidifier.

- **Attic smells on non-attic floors:** If your first or second floor starts to smell like a musty attic, it could mean that poor air tightness is causing air to leak from the attic to other floors. And that means you're losing energy due to air leaks. Address this problem by improving your air tightness between the attic and other living spaces.
 - **Fumes and gas smells:** Smells of wood stoves, furnaces, boilers, and other combustion appliances inside the house can mean that your indoor air is being contaminated by things like carbon monoxide, particulate matter, and other odourless gases. This can add serious health hazards to your home. Consult with a building contractor to find out what the problem is.
 - **Chemical smells:** Do you still smell that "fresh paint" scent even months after painting? Or is your "new" furniture still wafting chemical scents throughout your house? Then you may be the victim of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) which pollute indoor and outdoor air. Short of getting rid of these elements in your home (not such an eco-friendly choice), the best way to combat this type of air pollution is to ensure you adequately ventilate your indoor space. And next time, look for products made with indoor air quality in mind, like those that are [Greenguard Certified](#).
 - **Kitchen smells:** If you can still smell those fried onions or that baked fish for hours after the meal was consumed, you may have a ventilation problem in your kitchen. Not only can this muddle your indoor air quality, it may also add unnecessary moisture to your indoor space. Make sure you follow [GreenSpec guidance](#) for selecting a range hood to combat this problem.
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Mold in your house can mean serious health hazards and building science problems

Images via Flickr: [NancyHugoCKD.com](#) and [Bobaloo Rox](#).



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