



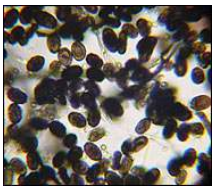
**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES NEWSLETTER**

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## Prevent Mold Problems

By Lisa Leslie

Mold spores can be found everywhere in the air indoors and outdoors. These spores have the best chance of growing and thriving at relative humidity levels above 60% and in temperature ranges in 66-86 °F temperature range. These conditions describe typical Florida weather conditions, so it can be a challenge to keep mold spores from becoming a full blown problem in our homes. There is no practical way to eliminate all mold spores in the indoor environment. However, there are steps you can take to prevent mold from becoming a big problem.

### Is there a magic bullet to preventing mold problems?

We receive many questions from people asking if there is one special product they can use to use to kill mold and prevent it from coming back. The truth is there is no magic bullet... the key to mold control is moisture control.

The best way to control mold growth in our homes is to keep moisture levels in our homes low. That means keeping moisture levels in the air low, as well as keeping water from leaking into the

home. Try to keep relative humidity levels in the home in 60-70% range.

### Keep Moisture Out

Water in your home can come from many sources. It can enter your home from leaks in the roof or window areas. Showers or even cooking can add moisture to the air in your home. The amount of moisture that the air in your home can hold depends on the temperature of the air. As the temperature goes down, the air is able to hold less moisture. This is why, in cold weather, moisture condenses on cold surfaces (for example, drops of water form on the inside of a window).

Moisture levels travel from high to low. So when the humidity levels outside are high ...water vapor has a higher potential of entering your home. In Florida, moisture control usually requires keeping windows and doors closed. It is also a good idea to keep the air conditioning fan in the "auto" position. Keeping the fan on when the air conditioner cycles off can cause moist air from outside to travel into the home.



Since we cannot dry-out our homes by opening the windows, we must rely on our air conditioning systems to remove moisture. A properly functioning air conditioner will cycle on long enough to cool the air and remove moisture.

This means that bigger is not better in terms of a Florida air conditioning system. The size of an air conditioner is often discussed in term of tons.

Oversized units cool the air quickly and cycle off without doing a good job of removing the moisture in the air. A Manual J calculation should always be completed to determine the correct size of an air conditioning system for a home.

It is also important that the ducts attached to your air conditioning unit are properly sealed.

Improperly sealed ducts can lead to mold problems.

Tampa Electric has a program to help defray the cost of sealing ductwork. It costs \$79 for the average home. The cost covers sealing accessible ductwork, such as around registers and the air handler with mastic. Mastic is a thick pasty substance that hardens and is not prone to failure. Studies have shown that many tapes that are typically used to seal ductwork tend to fail over time. Properly sealing your air handler is especially important if it is located in the garage or attic.



### Should you test for mold?

It is usually not a good idea to test for

mold. Money spent on mold testing would be better spent on finding the moisture problem. Remember, a mold problem is really a moisture problem. So, spend your money and resources finding out why moisture levels are high and cleaning up the mold. As discussed, excessive moisture can be the result of a leak or high levels of moisture in the air inside the home.



### Hiring a Professional

You may want to hire a professional, if you have an extensive mold problem. Shop carefully. There are no state

standards that govern who can do mold remediation work. Extensive contamination should be assessed by an experienced health and safety professional and remediated by personnel with training and experience. Look for a professional who follows an industry standard such as those from the American Conference of Industrial Hygienists or the Institute of Inspection Cleaning and Restoration Certification (IICRC).



Remember mold spores are everywhere in Florida. Spotting mold in the home is usually not cause for alarm. The key is to eliminate the moisture problem and thoroughly clean up the mold.

The following websites offer more information about mold prevention and cleanup:

Environmental Protection Agency,  
<http://www.epa.gov/mold/moldguide.htm>

Florida Department of Health -  
[http://www.myfloridaeh.org/community/indoor-air/Indoor\\_Mold\\_and\\_Health.pdf](http://www.myfloridaeh.org/community/indoor-air/Indoor_Mold_and_Health.pdf)



# Reasoning with Teens

Joe Pergola, Regional Family Life Extension Faculty

Teens demonstrate a heightened level of self-consciousness. They tend to believe that everyone is as concerned with their thoughts and behaviors as they are.

Teens tend to believe that no one else has ever experienced similar feelings and emotions. They may become overly dramatic in describing things that are upsetting to them. They may say things like “You’ll never understand,” or “My life is ruined!”



Teens tend to exhibit the “it can’t happen to me” syndrome also known as a “personal fable.” This belief causes teens to take unnecessary risks like drinking and driving (“I won’t crash this car”), having unprotected sex (“I can’t possibly get pregnant”), or smoking (“I can’t possibly get cancer”).

Teens tend to become very cause-oriented. Their activism is related to the ability to think about abstract concepts.

Teens tend to exhibit a “justice” orientation. They are quick to point out inconsistencies between adults’ words and their actions. They have difficulty seeing shades of gray. They see little room for error.

## What Can You Do?

Don’t take it personally when teens discount your experience. Try to empathize with and listen to their concerns. Enlist the help of a slightly older sibling or friend to give good advice to the teen if needed.



Get teens involved in discussing their behavioral rules and consequences. Teens should take a more active role in determining how they should behave. Their advanced reasoning skills make it easier for them to generate realistic consequences for their actions. Listen to their ideas!

Provide opportunities for teens to participate in controlled risky behavior. Get teens involved in properly supervised extreme sports, such as parachuting, or rock climbing. Such activities will allow teens opportunities to play out their “it can’t happen to me” mentality in an environment that won’t be deadly if they fail.

Provide opportunities for teens to get involved in community service. Teens want to become active in things that have deeper meaning. Talk with them about their experiences.



Talk to teens about their views and be open to discussing your own. Find out what they think about news stories on television or in the paper; ask them about their political and spiritual beliefs. Teens are already thinking about these things so give them a non-threatening forum for discussing them.

Try to build a genuine relationship with your teen. Let them know what you were like as a teen. Talk to them about your mistakes and vulnerabilities. Try to understand their feelings and express yours so you can be understood.

*References:*  
*Adolescent Growth and Development. Angela Huebner, Asst. Prof. and Extension Specialist. Virginia Cooperative Extension.*



# Teaching Children to Resolve Conflict

Diana Converse, Family Life Faculty



Research shows that a child's ability to get what they want in an acceptable manner is directly related to the number of solutions or alternatives they can generate. A child who can think of five ways to get what he wants will generally display more socially acceptable behavior than a child who can think of only one or two ways.

Want to help your children be better able to think of alternatives? Here are a few tips:

- Get the facts and feelings. When children are upset, fighting, angry or hurt, first find out the details. When questions like, "What happened?" are asked calmly and non-judgmentally, children usually calm down and answer them.
- Spend some time focusing on feelings. Children see things primarily from their own perspective. They may be completely unaware of how their behavior affects other people, except when another person interferes with their needs. To negotiate solutions that are fair to everyone, children need to know how others feel.
- Generating ideas for solutions is much easier for children when they have a clear goal. When children suggest alternatives, adults can repeat the ideas then ask them what else could be done.
- Help children define the problem in terms of what both children want to happen. For example, "What can you do so you have room to play with blocks and your brother has room to drive his truck?" When the problem is phrased this way, children get the

idea that the needs of both are important.

- Resist the temptation to suggest ideas as most children might assume their own thoughts are not good enough. If a child needs new ideas, suggest them later or ask the child to imagine how someone else they know might handle the situation.
- Evaluate consequences. After the children have generated all the ideas they can, evaluate the consequences. Ask them, "What might happen if you \_\_\_\_?" or "How might Matt feel if you \_\_\_\_?"
- Resist the temptation to judge the ideas. An adult will not always be around to tell a child that his/her idea is not good and to suggest another. In the long run, adults will be more helpful by encouraging children to evaluate ideas themselves and see why they are unacceptable.
- Ask for a decision. When the children have completed thinking of and evaluation ideas, the remaining task is to make a plan. Restate the problem, summarize the ideas, and let the children decide which they will try. If they choose an alternative you think will not work, be sure they know what they should do next.



The process of teaching problem solving often seems tedious, and parents may be tempted to just tell a child what to do. But that does not allow children to gain the experience of thinking of what to do for themselves.

Source: *The Ohio State University Extension.*

# Why Aren't There Effective Pills Yet for Weight Loss?

Mary A. Keith, PhD, LD, Foods, Nutrition and Health Agent



Aside from the fact that our society much prefers taking pills to making changes in our habits, doctors are beginning to ask the same question. After all, overweight is as much of a chronic disease as high

blood pressure or diabetes. All three conditions cause multiple side effects in various organs or systems. All three are related to diet.

But we only have approved drugs for two of them, and those two happen to be the ones that are not visibly obvious. You can't tell by looking at someone that they have diabetes or high blood pressure. And having diabetes or hypertension does not change the way people look at you the way being overweight affects your relationships.

Part of the problem lies in the fact that for years or centuries, society considered overweight to be simply a sign of lack of willpower or bad habits. If you were strong enough, you should be able to take care of the problem yourself.

We still think of it as something we can cure with a diet, and once the diet is done, we should be okay. But we all know that people need to watch their salt and take their blood pressure medications every day. If they stop, the pressure goes back up again. If a diabetic neglects their medications or overdoes the sugar and starch, their sugar rises. So why do we think we should be able to cure being overweight with a one-month diet?

Still, most of the medications that have been tried or that are being used in attempts to control weight are only allowed for limited times. This is partly due to the fact that many of the past drugs have had side effects.



## Risks and Benefits

Think back on the phen-fen problem. Use of this combination led to serious heart problems in many women who used it. When thyroid hormone was used for weight control, people developed hyperthyroidism. Dinitrophenol was prescribed in the 1930's, until doctors realized it was causing cataracts. Ephedra use has resulted in the deaths of several people, heart and liver problems in many others. It has now been banned from the herbal market, but is still available if you look hard enough.

Several related weight loss drugs are amphetamines. These do decrease appetite, for about 4 to 6 hours. They also increase the calories you burn. But they do this because they are stimulants that speed up your heart. For this reason they may not be prescribed if you are taking any number of heart-related medications. Side effects include insomnia, high blood pressure, dry mouth, nervousness and heart irregularity. Some of these are off the market because of these problems, some are still available even with their risks, some are abused. But none of them provide lasting, significant weight loss!

## Promising Studies

There is one medication in the amphetamine class that is still under study, and that seems more promising as a weight loss aid. Sibutramine not only promotes weight loss, it also appears to effect appetite, making people feel full much faster. Both short and long term studies found that people lost more weight and kept it off longer using this drug.

However, it still has an effect on blood pressure and can not be used by



people with irregular heart beats or other heart problems. It is still being studied and long term projects involving more people are still needed to be sure it will be safe.

Another drug being studied is Orlistat. It ties up enzymes in our intestines that digest fat. If they can't work we can't absorb the fat we eat. So more fat is excreted instead of getting into our bloodstream. Depending on how much fat you eat, you can excrete as much as 200 calories' worth in a day.

As always, there are problems too. The fat we can't absorb has to go through our bowels on the way out. While there it causes gas, diarrhea, urgency and oily stools. The symptoms tend to make people stop eating as much fat, which helps too.

There is also evidence we also excrete some of our vitamins A, D, and E along with the fat. We can't afford to be vitamin deficient just to lose weight.

Similar side effects occur with two medications prescribed for diabetes control. Acarbose and miglitol have not been approved for weight loss, but diabetics using them often lose weight. Instead of preventing the absorption of fat they prevent the digestion of starch.

There is at least one bread on the market that contains this type of product. You eat the bread, but can't digest the starch. It goes right on through you like fiber. However the bacteria in our bowel digest starch, and produce lots of gas in the process. The result is bloating, gas and stomach and intestinal pain.

Even with the discomfort, the amount of weight lost is not usually significant.

There are several other drugs on the market



for diabetes, seizures, depression or other conditions that seem to cause weight loss as a side effect. They are being studied, but are not approved for weight control yet. Some have other effects, some have very little effect on weight. Some seem to only work on people with other metabolic problems such as diabetes.

### How much weight loss is significant?

How much weight do we need to lose? With all the discussion of BMIs now, and the emphasis on getting to a healthy weight for height, some people look at a chart, realize they 'should' lose 150 pounds, and say "Forget it!". Some try, lose 10, get discouraged, and gain it all back again. Some risk their lives trying.

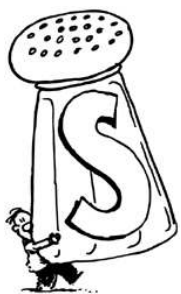
But more and more the medical evidence shows that **even if a person can lose just 5% or 10% of their present weight they will gain significant health benefits.** That means that if a 200 pound person can lose 10 to 20 pounds their risk of heart disease, diabetes and other related problems will go down. It won't be enough to make them slim and beautiful, but it will be enough to lower their blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels.

While medications might help with the initial weight loss, unless there are also changes in diet and lifestyle the weight will probably come back. There are drugs being tested. There may be drugs in the future. But they are only part of the picture. The weight loss does not have to be huge. It does not have to put you back into a size 6 dress. But just enough to take off 10% of your present weight can add years to your life. Don't wait for the drugs, go walking now!



# Please Don't Pass the Salt

By Loveda C. Perry, Extension Agent and Catherine Dau, student, University of Florida Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program



## Is salt really necessary?

Actually, sodium is an essential mineral needed for the body to carry out important functions. It helps to regulate the passage of water in and out of cells, control blood pressure, send out nerve impulses and signals muscles to contract or relax. Although sodium is essential, meaning we need to get it from our diet, the problem arises because we get too much.

## How much salt do you have in a day?

The average American consumes 4,000-6,000 milligrams a day, more than double the amount recommended. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends limiting sodium intake to 2,300 mg per day, which is equivalent to about one teaspoon. Those extra shakes from the salt shaker can quickly add up, putting you above a healthy amount. The effects of increased sodium intake can cause a number of health problems including hypertension, or high blood pressure. Hypertension increases your risk of stroke, heart attacks and kidney failure. Edema, or swelling, can also become a problem because the excess sodium can not be excreted when the kidneys do not work properly. Staying within the guidelines will reduce your risk of these health problems.

There should be no difficulty receiving the proper amount of sodium in your diet. The requirement needed in the body is usually met with the salt naturally occurring in foods. The key word is *naturally*. Salt, which is 40% sodium and 60% chloride, is used in many of the foods we consume, most commonly as a preservative. The majority of salt in the diet comes from processed foods, including sausage, bacon, croissants and



even vegetables. Be on the lookout for the words *sodium*, *salt* and *soda* in ingredients. The assorted kinds of salts including kosher, sea, seasoned, light or rock do not differ much in sodium content. One is not better for your health than another, they just vary in texture and flavor. *Do foods taste better with an extra sprinkle of salt?* The preference for salty foods is an acquired taste. Gradually decreasing the amount of salt in your diet actually reduces your liking of the flavor.

Here are some tips to help you reduce your intake of sodium:

- Rinse canned foods, including tuna, vegetables and legumes. This can reduce 40% of the sodium used to preserve it.
- Season foods with spices, herbs, vinegar, lemon or lime juice.
- Buy fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Choose “no-salt” or “low, reduced sodium” foods.
- Different brands of the same food can vary in sodium content, read labels and compare.
- Keep the salt shaker in the cabinet, not on the stove or table.
- Taste food first before adding condiments. Ketchup, mustard, barbecue sauce and soy sauces contain a lot of sodium.
- Substitute fruits and vegetables as snacks instead of pretzels or chips.
- When dining out, ask for sauces and dressings on the side.
- Try roasting, stewing or baking foods. This brings out the natural flavors without extra salt needed.
- Limit cured, corned, pickled or smoked foods.



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