

What is MCS?

Multiple chemical sensitivities (MCS) is a complex physical condition in which people react adversely to common everyday chemicals in their environment. It is also called “environmental illness” (EI) or “twentieth-century disease”, because thousands of new synthetic chemicals have been added to our environment since World War II. Few of these chemicals have been tested for their human health effects.

Where are these chemicals? You can encounter them in such products as:

- pesticides
- perfumes
- inks and dyes
- paints, stains, and waxes
- detergents and fabric softeners
- carpeting and carpet pads
- cleaning and building products
- cosmetics and shampoos
- pressed-wood furniture
- antibacterial soaps and deodorants
- prescription and nonprescription drugs
- gas stoves, furnaces and hot-water heaters
- synthetic clothes and bedding
- treated fabrics
- tobacco smoke
- copy-machine toner
- processed (factory-produced) foods and many other sources.

Do you have it?

If you have a chronic illness your doctor cannot seem to help, you may be reacting to chemicals in your home, school, or work environment. It’s a matter of your total chemical load – the cumulative effect of all the chemicals you breathe, touch, put on your skin, drink, or eat every day. Together they may be affecting your health.

What are some illnesses with an environmental component?

- asthma and allergies
- fibromyalgia (muscle pain)
- chronic fatigue syndrome
- migraines
- epilepsy
- electrical sensitivity
- candidiasis

What are some symptoms of chemical sensitivity?

- headaches
- nausea and dizziness
- joint pains and muscle aches
- gastrointestinal disturbances
- persistent flu-like condition
- rashes and hair loss
- loss of memory and ability to concentrate
- depression and sleep disorders
- seizure disorders
- hyperactivity in children
- eye, ear, nose, mouth, and throat irritation

Can you get it?

Anyone can become chemically sensitive at any time. It’s like a rain barrel gradually filling up with water (chemicals) until one final drop (exposure) causes the water to run over (symptoms). The National Research Council estimates that about 15 percent of people in the US are sensitive to chemicals in common household products. (*Chemical Exposures: Low Levels and High Stakes*, by Nicholas A. Ashford, PhD, JD, and Claudia S. Miller, MD, Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1998).

How can you avoid it?

For EI/MCS the treatment of choice is avoidance – learning what to avoid and how to avoid it. This may be simple, like changing to unscented, plant-based cleaning and personal grooming products. Or it may be harder, like removing your new synthetic wall-to-wall carpeting and refinishing your floors with nontoxic sealers or waxes. Or it may move into the category of “there’s no way”, like trying to get your co-workers not to wear perfumes.

The other thing you need to do is to build up your body’s resistance to our toxic environment by eating simple, unprocessed, organic foods and by taking appropriate dietary supplements.

Whom can you contact?

You may find that you want to be in touch with people who are having similar symptoms and experiences – in other words, a support group. With these illnesses, a friendly sharing of information and understanding becomes vital. MCS: Health & Environment is a Chicago-based national support group that offers its members important benefits:

- regular meetings
- interesting and inspiring speakers
- a lending library of useful books, audiotapes, and videotapes
- a 58-page Resource Guide
- a bimonthly newsletter, *CanaryNews*, featuring resources, meetings, items for sale, EI-safe housing, needed political action, interesting articles, new books, the latest therapies, and national and local press coverage.

We see ourselves as canaries in the modern chemical “coal” mines, warning others of danger. You may contact us at:

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Bannockburn, Illinois 60015
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“MCS patients –
the proverbial canaries in the mine –
may be the early victims of
better living through chemistry.”

MCS is preventable

M C S Multiple Chemical Sensitivities

what is it?

do you have it?

can you get it?

how can you avoid it?

*what are
twentieth-century
chemicals
doing
to your health?*
