

MCS Matters



Causes of MCS

MCS etiology is hotly debated among physicians: some believe that MCS is the result of increase in exposure to irritants or a toxic injury, some believe that MCS is a physical illness with a yet-to-be-determined mechanism, and some believe that MCS is psychosomatic. Despite this debate, there is consensus that patients who complain of symptoms should avoid chemical irritants as best as possible. Respect in care and recommendation of avoidance of irritants is now standard protocol recommended by the American Medical Association.

Several chemical-producing companies, especially producers of pesticides, have funded studies that have cast doubts on the existence and cause of MCS. Some people with MCS say that they were injured by a single exposure to chemicals. Others say that they developed an intolerance to chemicals over time. Others are uncertain as to how their intolerance to chemicals developed. However, all agree that exposure to chemical irritants precipitates sometimes disabling symptoms such as migraine headache, sinus congestion, itchy eyes and throat, nausea and vomiting, indigestion, irritable bowel, constipation, bloating, rashes, asthma, muscle aches, joint aches, fatigue, flu like symptoms, depression, irritability, anxiety, mania, inability to concentrate, stupor, sleepiness, insomnia.

Diagnosis

Conventional medicine does not typically recognize the MCS diagnosis, because to date there is no definitive test for diagnosis or proven scientific mechanism. Symptoms may be explainable by allergic, metabolic, enzymatic, inflammatory, infectious, or psychological mechanism. Because the nature and cause(s) of MCS are still unanswered, conventional medical testing for legal purposes is not yet available.

Unknown chemicals in the testing environment may confuse research results. In one blinded test, patients appeared to show no reaction to suspected substances. The same patients also seemed to react to saline solution injections and purified air injected into their environment. Chemical contamination of the testing environment may have affected results.

Allergist Theron G Randolph (1906-1995) coined the term “multiple chemical sensitivities.” He observed in his clinical patients that exposure to low levels to modern synthetic chemicals caused a wide range of symptoms. His observations challenged the toxicology maxim that there must be a correlation between level chemical dose and the level of symptom effect.

Randolph theorized that the human body is like a barrel filling up with chemicals until it is full. Any further exposure to chemicals causes allergic reactions, like the straw that broke the camel's back.

Science recognizes that there are chemicals that build up in the body (such as mercury), but these are not yet recognized to cause allergic reactions. However, some people claim that after a meal of fish, they have an immediate bout of diarrhea. This may be another chemical sensitivity reaction.

Chemicals such as mercury can also cause organ failure, such as failure of the liver (which is involved in storing these chemicals) or the kidneys (involved in filtering them out). Some chemicals are also stored in body fat. These effects have never been found in MCS patients, either suggesting that they actually do not suffer from the effects of chemicals or that there is another mechanism (possibly the

one Randolph proposed) to blame for their symptoms.

It may be that chemical sensitivities and exposure cause low coping mechanisms rather than that low coping mechanisms cause chemical sensitivities. One MCS patient had her mercury-based filling removed from her mouth, became outgoing, got a good job, and reversed a lifetime pattern of "low coping."

For practical purposes, according to a patient survey by Alison Johnson, the most reliable way to achieve relief from symptoms and to create long-term improvement in health is to avoid the offending chemicals.

Triggers

People diagnosed with MCS suffer widely assorted symptoms blamed on exposure to trace levels of environmental chemicals. In one person formaldehyde may cause arthritis, in another insomnia, in another sore throat. In one person, insomnia may be caused by phenols, in another by MSG, in another by sulfites. This lack of correlation between symptom and chemical trigger makes research difficult.

Common Symptoms of MCS

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- anaphylactic shock
- difficulty breathing, chest pains and asthma
- skin irritation, contact dermatitis, and hives or other forms of skin rash
- migraine headaches
- "brain fog" (short term memory loss, cognitive dysfunction including attention deficit
- digestive difficulties, nausea, indigestion/heartburn, vomiting, diarrhea
- food intolerances, which may or may not be clinically identifiable (e.g., lactose intolerance, celiac disease), commonly wheat and dairy.
- joint and muscle pains
- extreme fatigue, lethargy and lassitude
- vertigo/dizziness
- abnormally acute sense of smell (which may simply be the result of ridding one's home of strong masking scents, therefore purging olfactory neurons)
- sensitivity to natural plant fragrance, pine turpines
- insomnia
- dry mouth, dry eyes
- overactive bladder

Helpful Info From Members

I have found the following mail order catalogues useful for MCS-friendly products:

The Healthy House	Tel: 0845 450 5950
Natural Collection	Tel: 0870 331 3333
Neals Yard (Baseline Range)	Tel: 0845 262 3145

MCS-Friendly Flooring

These companies have been recommended by other 25% Members:

Construction Resources	Tel: 0207 450 2211
Crucial Trading	Tel: 01562 743747
The Alternative Flooring Co.	Tel: 01264 335111

From Rachel Scott

www.chemicalfree.co.uk provide FREE information and support to anyone affected by chemical sensitivity or multiple food intolerance:

They offer:

- Practical information and coping strategies
- Directory of foods and chemical-free products
- Where to find practitioners and treatments
- Support group and message boards

From Sue Kerley

Abaca – Manufacturers of Organic Mattresses

Abaca are designers and makers of expertly crafted and comfortable mattresses. They use only the purest and highest quality organic materials.

Abaca currently produces two types of mattress: pocket sprung and metal free. These mattresses are built up of layers of materials with different properties to give the right combination of support and comfort. Abaca has developed several innovative new wool products which are used in their mattresses giving unrivalled organic luxury. These truly are a superb quality product.

Their Metal Free Mattresses have all the features and benefits mentioned above, but use natural latex (sap from the Hevea tree) as an alternative to metal springs. Soil Association Certification is currently on-going.

For further information, visit their website on:

<http://www.abacaorganic.co.uk/>, or contact,

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Email: info@abacaorganic.co.uk

10% discount will be offered to members of the 25% ME Group, if purchasing a mattress from them.