

# Multiple Chemical Sensitivity

**MCS: a 1999 consensus<sup>1</sup> stated that "Multiple Chemical Sensitivity is:**

1. a chronic condition
2. with symptoms that occur reproducibly
3. in response to low levels of exposure
4. to multiple unrelated chemicals that
5. improve or resolve when incitants are removed, &
6. symptoms occur in multiple organ systems."

**The most effective management of MCS according to sufferers is:<sup>2</sup>**

- chemically safe housing,
- avoiding incitants, and
- prayer".

**World Health Organisation (GERMANY), 2000 ICD 10**

SGBV: 3.1 Code T 78.4:

Chemical sensitivity syndrome, multiple.<sup>3</sup>

**Saito et al concluded:<sup>4</sup>**

"MCS patients do not have somatic or psychologic symptoms under chemical-free conditions, and symptoms may be provoked only when exposed to chemicals."

## Causes

Many medical journal articles state that exposure to chemicals has induced MCS. About 50% of patients associate the cause of their MCS to exposures of one or more of the following chemical types<sup>5</sup>: solvents, petrochemicals, pesticides, herbicides, carpet, glues, rubber, industrial emissions, pollution, carbonless copy paper, colognes, fragrances, scented air fresheners, moulds, preservatives, plastics, new furnishings, silicon breast implants, medications, anaesthetics, hair spray, nail polishes, cleaning products, food additives, heavy metals, and more.

## Stages

**Initiation**, characterized by a profound reduction in prior tolerance resulting from either acute or chronic exposure to chemicals (pesticides, solvents, indoor air contaminants, etc.), followed by

**Triggering** of symptoms by small quantities of previously tolerated chemicals (traffic exhaust, fragrances, gasoline), foods, drugs, and food/drug combinations (alcohol, caffeine)<sup>6</sup>

## Symptoms

MCS symptoms vary greatly for each patient regarding frequency, intensity, inhalation or dermal exposure.<sup>5,6,8,11,14,15</sup>

**Digestive Tract:** Nausea. Vomiting. Diarrhoea. Constipation. Bloating. Belching. Gas. Heartburn. Intestinal aches/pains.

**Ears:** Itchy. Aches. Infections. Drainage.

**Emotions:** Mood swings. Anxiety. Fear. Nervousness. Anger. Irritability. Aggressiveness. Depression.

**Energy/Activity:** Fatigue (chronic). Sluggishness. Feeling of weakness. Hyperactive. Restlessness.

**Eyes:** Watery. Itchy. Stinging. Aching. Swollen. Reddened. Sticky eyelids. Bags or dark circles under eyes. Variable blurred vision. Allodynia. Tunnel vision.

**Head:** Headaches. Faintness. Dizziness. Insomnia. Sleepiness.

**Heart:** Irregular, Skipped, Rapid, Pounding, Slow beat. Chest pain. High/Low blood pressure.

**Lung:** Congestion. Asthma. Bronchitis. Shortness of breath. Difficulty breathing.

**Mind:** Poor memory, comprehension, concentration or physical coordination. Confusion. Difficult decision-making. Stutter. Stammer. Slurred speech. Learning impairments.

**Mouth:** Swollen or discoloured tongue, gums or lips. White, clear or blood blisters. Canker sores.

**Muscle & Joint:** Arthritic pain in joint/s. Stiffness. Fibromyalgia. Muscle pain. Aches. Spasm. Muscular exercise intolerance.

**Nose:** Stuffy. Sinus problems. Hay fever. Sneezing attacks. Excessive mucus.

**Skin:** Acne. Hives. Itches. Rash. Prickly. Bruising easily. Dry peeling or flaking (either burnt or unburnt). Hair loss. Flushing. Hot flashes. Excessive sweating.

**Upper Airways:** Chronic cough. Gagging. Clearing throat regularly. Easily irritable airways. Sore throat. Hoarseness. Voice loss.

**Urinary/Genital:** Itching or discharge. Frequent urination. Frequent 'Urinary Tract Infections'. Aching testis/ovaries.

**Weight:** Under weight. Excessive weight. Water retention. Compulsive eating/drinking. Cravings for either food or beverage including water.

**Miscellaneous:** Inflamed lymph glands. Frequent unknown illness or infection.

## Comorbidity

Disorders with overlapping symptoms with MCS include:

- Environmental Hypersensitivity
- Environmental Illness (EI)
- Sick Building Syndrome
- Total Allergy Syndrome
- Gulf War Syndrome
- Toxic Encephalopathy
- Myalgic Encephalomyelitis
- Chronic Fatigue Syndrome
- Fibromyalgia
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- Headache or Migraine
- Asthma
- Reactive Airway Dysfunction Syndrome
- Reactive Upperairway Dysfunction Syndrome
- Peripheral Neuropathy

## Prevalence

United States

- **2%**, New Mexico (diagnosed)<sup>7</sup>
- **2.5%**, National (diagnosed)<sup>8</sup>
- **3.1%**, Georgia (diagnosed)<sup>9</sup>
- **6.3%**, California (diagnosed EI or MCS)<sup>10</sup>
- **3.9%**, North Carolina (self-reported)<sup>11</sup>
- **2.5-3%**, Iowa (Military; non-deployed, self-reported)<sup>12</sup>
- **35.9%**, Gulf War Registry (Military; deployed, selfreported)<sup>13</sup>

Canada

- **2.4%**, Multiple chemical sensitivity<sup>14</sup>

New South Wales, Australia

- **"2.9%** diagnosed with Chemical Sensitivity".<sup>15</sup>
- **"24.6%"** reported "sensitivity to chemical odours".<sup>15</sup>

South Australia

- **"0.9%....** medically diagnosed with MCS".<sup>16</sup>
- **"16.4%"** experiencing chemical sensitivity".<sup>16</sup>

## Preferred Physicians

Environmental medicine physicians most frequently deal with MCS patients on a day-to-day basis. Occupational medicine physicians are sometimes helpful for diagnostic purposes. Other doctors can be helpful but usually treat symptomatically and maybe useful for general support.

- **American Association of Environment Medicine**  
aaem.com/Referable\_Physicians.html
- **Australasian College of Nut. & Environ. Medicine**  
acnem.org/referrals/index.htm

## Physicians Websites

Physicians listed here do not necessarily endorse the contents of this brochure. They are indicative of what is available for information purposes only.

- **Dr Grace Ziem**  
chemicalinjury.net
- **Dr Gunnar Heuser**  
toxgun.com
- **Dr Doris Rapp**  
drrapp.com
- **Dr Mark Donohoe**  
homepage.mac.com/doctormark/Menu7.html

## Support

Organisations listed here do not necessarily endorse or have published this brochure. This brochure does not necessarily endorse the organisations listed.

- **MCS Global**  
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- **MCS America**  
mcs-america.org
- **MCS Australia** - Portal  
mcs-australia.org
- **MCS Referral & Resources**  
mcsrr.org

Consultants

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# Multiple Chemical Sensitivity Syndrome a chronic complex multi-organ disease

## MCS Australia

linking chemically sensitive individuals