Q & A

Diagnostic Tools for MCS

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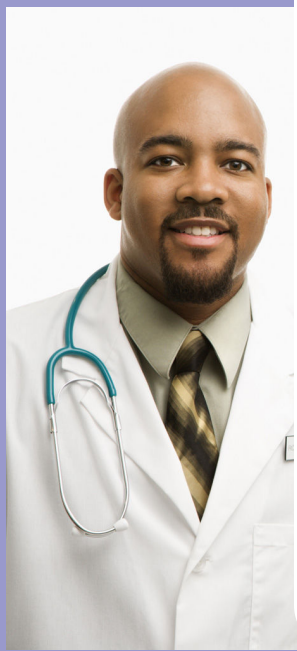

Q: I am seeing more and more patients with complaints of non-allergic sensitivities to chemical substances. What exactly is multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS) and are there any diagnostic tools to determine if a patient has MCS?

Multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS) is a disorder incited by toxic chemical substances. People with MCS have a reduced ability to metabolize chemical substances, leading to toxicity. This results in inflammatory cytokines and oxidative stress, among other things which can be revealed in a thorough medical workup.

MCS is often mistaken as an allergy. Allergy testing will rule out allergy as a cause for reactions to specific substances.

Symptoms of MCS are life altering, unlike allergic symptoms which are generally regarded at varying levels of annoyance.

People with MCS are exquisitely sensitive. Symptoms appear when the person is exposed to even the smallest amounts chemical substances with toxic properties. These substances are commonly found in fragrances, scented products, cleaning products, and other goods.

The symptoms of MCS are not triggered by odors. Odor itself is not necessarily toxic and many toxic chemical triggers are odorless.

A thorough medical workup is advised to rule out other possible conditions, including metabolic, endocrine, allergic, and neurological diseases. Once MCS is suspected, the QEESI (Quick Environmental Exposure Survey) may be used to check if the patient fits the profile of MCS.

The QEESI is a standardized questionnaire developed by Dr. Claudia Miller that assists researchers and clinicians when evaluating patients for chemical sensitivity. It measures exposure levels and symptom severity and estimates the life impact of a chemical injury.

An ALCAT chemical intolerance panel may be useful to uncover chemical intolerances. Information about the ALCAT may be found at http://www.alcat.com.

Many other clinical variations may be found in MCS patients (hair analysis, blood test, SPECT scan, rhinoscopy, Rinkel test, etc) which, in combination, may help confirm a diagnosis. Vitamin and mineral deficiencies linked to malabsorption and a host of other toxicological related alterations are quite common in the chemically injured.

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