

# Finding health with environmental illness

By Dan Howard

FOR TRIB TOTAL MEDIA

Imagine getting up each day feeling absolutely terrible. You dread facing another day. You're unable to think clearly or plan your day. You have an overwhelming guilt that you're a terrible burden on those around you. A feeling of helplessness washes over you because you're unable to find your way out of this sickness.

You've been tested for all types of illnesses that nobody would ever want to have, but you believe that even a dreaded diagnosis would be better than not knowing what has robbed you of a normal life. This is the life of an environmentally ill person.

We have accepted and understand that our diet affects our health.

Billions of dollars are spent on ads to influence what we eat. We often don't realize and understand that what we breathe, absorb through our skin or drink from a faucet or bottle can have a devastating effect on our health.

We don't consider that for some people, our homes, schools, workplaces, drinking water and parks are toxic.

Environmental illness is a terrible burden on those who suffer from it and on their loved ones. As a building scientist, I hear about this day after day. Like most professionals dealing with environmental illness, my involvement is because I've seen it firsthand. I watched my father slowly suffocate to death because of his asbestos exposure. He sprayed the stuff to make buildings firesafe for others, not to have his lungs fill with cancer. Surprise!

## What is environmental illness?

There are common symptoms with environmental diseases. There's often brain fog, numbness or pain, bowel issues, skin problems, missing hair, skin rashes, lethargy and confusion. Many have taken an endless list of prescription drugs designed to

alleviate symptoms. Those prescriptions have side effects that created new symptoms. When those symptoms were treated with new treatments, more of the above symptoms occurred.

There's also the financial burdens and the emotional roller coaster of raised and then dashed hopes. Stress makes the symptoms even worse.

People with environmental illness have more than symptoms in common. Most have already visited many physicians. Some have been told that they have an "idiopathic disease," which is medical speak for "you have a set of symptoms that are similar to an illness, but we don't know why or even if it is really true."

Others have been told that they must be imagining the illness. Almost all have their hopes of wellness dashed time and time again.

Often the biggest stress and challenge that the environmentally ill face is that their friends or family members don't understand or believe that the illness is real.

We know and accept that there are children who can eat a single peanut and go into anaphylactic shock. We understand that there are people who can react badly to the lifesaving drug penicillin. Despite this, some people can't understand how one person in a home could react to environmental problems while the others are still healthy.

## Finding the road to health

Let's imagine that you are the child with a deadly reaction to peanuts but don't realize it. One solution is to provide you with an EpiPen to inject you every time you turn blue and can't breathe. Another solution is to figure out that it is the peanuts that almost killed you and then stop eating them.

It's pretty easy to understand that avoiding the peanuts is a better plan. The challenge we face is that we first need to know that you're allergic to the peanuts. This is the start of our pathway to environmental health.

The fundamental problem in



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The first step to recovery is finding the source of the illness by testing the patient and the environment.

exploring causes of environmental illnesses is that those reactions occur in time delay. Our minds are trained to understand that it hurts if we hit our thumb with a hammer, and we should stop doing it. Environmental exposures are cumulative and in "time delay" often complicated in combinations of exposures and locations.

The first step to wellness is to identify the cause of the illness. Functional medicine practitioners have the approach of looking for the cause of the environmental reaction. Modern medicine has developed blood and urine tests that can identify the source of the illness. Underlying diseases such as Lyme disease, childhood diseases and occupational exposures also need to be explored because they can combine with environmental triggers to intensify an illness or delay recovery.

The next step is identifying the exposure that is making the client ill. Common environmental exposures include mold, household chemicals, pesticides, chemicals used in hobbies, illegal drugs, HVAC defects, sewer backups, tainted water, air pol-

lutants, off-gassing construction materials and allergens. Many of these exposures can only be identified through testing. Identifying possible sources and using the proper testing methods is where the environmental inspector comes in handy.

This investigative process involves developing a list of potential exposures and then looking at how these exposures match with testing by the functional medical practitioner.

After they are identified, the sources of the illness need to be avoided. Removing the sources of environmental triggers is another difficult part of the puzzle. The environmental consultant should, wherever possible, provide a plan or options to avoid the exposure that is making people ill.

Modern medical science is developing treatments to remove toxins from the environmentally ill patient. The challenge is that each of us is a unique individual. We are complex organic machines. Treatments that work with some of us will not work with others. Removing toxins from the miraculous and complex human body usually takes time and some-

times multiple approaches.

The good news is that if we avoid toxic environmental exposures, the body tries to help heal itself.

Modern man has developed an endless stream of new products and chemicals in the name of making life better, easier or more convenient. It doesn't always work that way. There are defects in manufacture and, in some instances, reckless behaviors that expose innocent people to toxic health risks. When this happens, it is devastating to the lives that are touched.

Sadly, the people who are environmentally ill are often accused of psychological problems or not helped in a way that can restore their health and the lives of friends and family.

Go to [www.envirospect.com/HealingIllness](http://www.envirospect.com/HealingIllness) for links and sources of additional information.

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