

Improve Your Indoor Environmental Quality

TIPS TO TRY AT HOME

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) June 2009 Indoor Environmental Quality Policy was created to protect their employees from exposures that harm health. You can adopt their Policy to make your home environment a safer place to live and raise your family.

Here are some suggestions to improve your home environment and your health:

1. Avoid using perfumed personal care products. These may include essential oils, perfumes, deodorants, hand lotions, shampoos, and hair sprays that contain fragrances.
2. Use unscented detergents and fabric softeners.
3. Purchase “green” cleaning products and building materials. “Green” products are biodegradable, of low toxicity, fragrance-free, and less hazardous to human health or the environment. Ask retailers for Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) to determine toxicity levels.
4. Do not use pesticides in your home or on your lawn unless absolutely necessary. Utilize the least-toxic chemicals and use only when needed. Ask for a MSDS for any products you are considering using. All pesticides are dangerous and by federal law, must be registered with the U.S. EPA.
5. Tie up trash bags and take them out daily to avoid attracting insects that may prompt the use of pesticides.
6. Store food in airtight containers and keep your home clean to prevent contamination of indoor air and conditions conducive to insect infestations.
7. Vacuum frequently and thoroughly using vacuums with high-efficiency filters (HEPA). Use fragrance free, non-petroleum based carpet cleaners and vacuum bags.
8. Contact a furnace/HVAC engineer for assistance if your home has temperature or humidity problems, is drafty, there is a lack of air or “stuffy” air, or if there is dirt or particulates coming from your furnace ventilation system. Ask if your furnace repairman has had formal training.
9. Keep your plumbing in good repair. Small leaks can cause major problems including mold and toxic out-gassing of building materials. This may cause health problems that include asthma, chemical sensitivity, memory loss, and more.
10. Use an electric mower or close doors and windows when operating your gas powered lawn mower or other gas powered equipment. Also close them when neighbors are idling vehicles, mowing their lawns, painting, and conducting other activities that emit toxic gases and fumes.

**OHIO NETWORK FOR THE CHEMICALLY INJURED
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HELP SUPPORT THOSE WITH MULTIPLE CHEMICAL SENSITIVITY (MCS) AND RELATED HEALTH DISORDERS

Those who have been harmed by chemical exposures and have developed Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) and/or related disorders need your support. Be kind, understanding, and empathetic to their needs, even though you may not fully understand the nature of the disability and its symptoms.

The Ohio Network for the Chemically Injured (ONFCI) is a not-for-profit corporation that educates about and advocates on behalf of those who have been harmed by toxic chemicals in our everyday environment. We urge you to join the growing number of those who have taken the time to educate themselves about MCS and have supported our efforts.

Wendy Jelinek, Greater Cleveland Endometriosis Association Support Group spokeswoman, supports the notion of taking small steps to improve our indoor air quality. Studies indicate that environmental toxins may be related to the cause of endometriosis.

SUPPORTERS OF MCS AWARENESS AND EDUCATION MONTH

“May is Multiple Chemical Sensitivity Awareness Month. It is important for everyone to be more aware that toxic chemicals are in products in everyday use and may cause serious ill effects, especially for those who are particularly sensitive to them. Problems commonly arise from fragrances, paints, coatings, solvents, cleaning fluids, chemicals used around office equipment, and vehicle exhausts. Symptoms of chemical sensitivity can be severe, including trouble breathing, irregular or rapid heartbeat, fatigue, headaches, disorientation, dizziness, gastrointestinal distress, muscle and joint pain, and skin rashes. One important thing that can be done is to have businesses and institutions adopt indoor environmental policies to ensure that workplaces are clean, safe, comfortable, and fragrance-free, and that efforts are made to protect the chemically sensitive. Encouraging development of such a policy at your place of work would be an excellent observance of Multiple Chemical Sensitivity Awareness Month this May.”

Dale Miller, Ohio State Senator

James Raggio, General Counsel for the *U.S. Access Board*, in a memo to ONFCI concerning accommodations for those with the disability of MCS stated: “The United States Federal Access Board has developed a fragrance free policy for all of its meetings and public gatherings... This is required to ensure that people with MCS and ES are able to participate fully without encountering the barrier of perfumes and other products that can cause severe reactions. Such a policy is reasonable and costs nothing. Further information about the Board’s fragrance-free policy can be obtained at: <http://www.access-board.gov/about/policies/fragrance.htm>

Local Proclamations for MCS Awareness and Education Month have included: Ohio Governor Ted Strickland, Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson and former Cleveland Mayor Jane Campbell, Berea Mayor Cyril Kleem and former Berea Mayor Joseph W. Biddlecombe, Strongsville Mayor Thomas Perciak, and Middleburg Heights Mayor Gary Starr.

Visit any Cuyahoga County Public Library or Cleveland Public Library’s Downtown Science and Technology Department to see MCS displays during MCS Awareness and Education Month in May.

For more information and to see an article about MCS in the Ohio Environmental Council’s **2010 Briefing Book** go to www.theoec.org/PDFs/LobbyDay/BriefingBook_2010.pdf and the **ONFCI website** at www.ohionetwork.org , or contact ONFCI at (440) 845-1888.

