

MOLD AND MYCOTOXIN-ILLNESS

Mycotoxin-induced illness is a rapidly emerging field of medicine, brought to the public's attention via Dr. Richie Shoemaker. There are numerous scientific articles and anecdotal evidence that support the diagnosis and treatment of mycotoxin-induced illness, but mainstream medicine unfortunately sees it as a controversial diagnosis. Other doctors that have developed protocols for mycotoxin-illness include Dr. Jill Carnahan, Dr. Joseph Brewer, Dr. William Rea, Dr. Dietrich Klinghardt, and Dr. Neil Nathan.

Treatment and recovery is highly dependent on symptoms and exposure to mycotoxins in the environment. For those who are ill, there will be questions, frustrations, "ebb and flow" of symptoms – and it can be a long road to recovery! But trust the process and your practitioner!

The following is a list of suggestions, based off my clinical experiences and research. There is no "one-size-fits-all" approach, but the following was created to minimize costs and decrease the overwhelm that accompanies this field of medicine.

-Meg McElroy MS, PA-C

INITIAL STEPS (proceed in order)

1. **Before "going down the mold rabbit hole", determine if your symptoms are consistent with mold exposure (see questionnaire for evaluation).**
 - a. If you don't have moderate to severe symptoms, focus your money on improving your environment (i.e. don't pursue the expensive medical tests)! Most people with mild illness get better just by eliminating the exposure.
2. **Consider undergoing a VCS (Visual Contrast Scale) assessment**, which costs around \$15 and gives you a "score" as to whether you are likely to have biotoxin exposure.
 - a. It is NOT a diagnostic test, but it is around 90% accurate in assessing whether mycotoxins or biotoxins are impacting your body. Find the assessment at www.survivingmold.com.
3. **Eliminate exposures:**
 - a. **First step** (if there is not obvious mold in your home/work): Take a 1-2 week "vacation" (and spend a lot of time outdoors during this time!). If your symptoms improve, suspect mold exposure.
 - b. **Second step** (if there is not obvious mold in your home/work): Hire a mold inspector to narrow down potential sources and locations of mold.
 - i. Most common locations for mold are air ducts, behind walls where water sources are located, and from roof leaks. This can cost a few hundred dollars but will help determine next steps.
 - ii. Ideally, the mold inspector should have a reputable certification that ensures they've had appropriate training.
 - c. **Third step:** If obvious mold is found, I recommend saving money and remediating (instead of going through mycotoxin testing of the environment). If there isn't obvious mold, testing

the air can be performed in multiple ways, and there are varying opinions on this, as to which is best. Testing options include:

- i. ERMI (PCR-based)
- ii. Tap testing (using a petri dish)
- iii. Spore trap testing with a vacuum (requires advanced training)
- iv. VOC and particulate meters
- v. Specific labs:
 1. ImmunoLytics
 2. Emma test (through RealTime Labs)
 3. EmLab (ERMI testing)
 4. Mycometrics

d. **Fourth step:** Good remediation. Look for companies that are certified by organizations such as the Professional Mold Instructional Institute, or the Institute of Cleaning and Mold Restoration.

- i. Other resources for learning about the details of remediation (e.g. dry vs wet fogging, negative air vs positive air containment, clearance reports, when to do follow up mycotoxin testing, etc):
 1. www.biobalancenow.com
 2. www.iaqm.com

4. Create a “health foundation”, to prepare the body for appropriate supplementation that removes mycotoxins/biotoxins

- a. Bowel movements: To remove any toxins, you must have a good bowel movement at least 1-2 times a day. Work with an experienced provider, if constipation is present.
- b. Drink at least 80 oz of filtered water daily (ideally filtered through reverse osmosis or through a Berkey water filter)
- c. Eliminate plastic dishware (including Tupperware and “to-go” cups). Replace with glass or ceramic.
- d. Optimize digestion. It is recommended to get a stool test done with a functional or integrative medicine practitioner, who can determine how your bile is working (essential for removing toxins from the body), if you have adequate digestive enzymes, and if your stomach is producing enough acid. All of these impact your ability to absorb nutrients (which help with your body’s ability to “detoxify”).
- e. Avoid foods that have a propensity to have mold. Mycotoxin illness can be from the environment, and/or it can be from your food. Many of these foods have a high propensity for mold simply because of how the food industry stores and produces these. Examples of foods that can have high mycotoxin levels include:
 - i. Grains
 - ii. Dairy
 - iii. Sugar
 - iv. Alcohol
 - v. Peanuts
 - vi. Coffee
 - vii. Mushrooms