

## How to Live with Multiple Chemical Sensitivity

the vapor into drinking water. During the process most inorganic contaminants like lead will be removed and bacteria and pathogens will be killed, but it does little to remove such volatile chemicals as benzene.

Whichever system you select, you will need to drink plenty of purified water. Drink eight eight-ounce glasses of water every day.

### Oasis

Regardless of our state of health, we all need a private place where we can find refuge from the world and all its problems. If you are chemically sensitive, your private place will be more than a retreat. It will be your haven from the chemical world that threatens your well-being. It will become your sheltering oasis, the one place where you are protected from the raging desert of chemical assaults. Properly outfitted, your oasis will become the safe haven to which you can escape after you have been chemically exposed.

At first, you will want to spend both day and night inside your oasis, to eat there and to sleep there in secure comfort. This can be considered rest time for your body. Your oasis may make it possible to relieve your symptoms without using medications. Free of chemical exposures, your immune system can recover from chemical susceptibility.

When you emerge from your filtered oasis after having spent several days and nights inside, you may find that you are sharply aware of the harmful and unpleasant fumes of certain chemicals. Some people can even taste chemical fumes. When that happens, you may immediately experience the return of your symptoms, or you may experience a delayed return of your symptoms. Since everyone responds differently to different incitants, your reaction will depend on many factors, including your particular chemical load and your state at the time of exposure. The important thing is that you do not allow yourself to become discouraged. In time your symptoms will be relieved more

rapidly each time you return to the oasis. This is a good sign that your treatment is working, that the oasis is helping, and that your immune system is rebuilding itself.

The ideal location for your "oasis" would include a bedroom and bath combination. If this combination is not available at your house, choose a room with a door that can be kept closed, and if necessary, a towel can be placed across the threshold to protect you from outside fumes. Have someone else clean the oasis thoroughly and set it up to the proper specifications.

Perhaps the most important item in your oasis is the air filter. Get the best you can afford. It should be allowed to run constantly.

Heating should be provided by radiant electric heaters or hot water electric heaters.

Remove all furniture, draperies, and clothing from the room. If possible, remove all carpeting. If carpeting cannot be removed, remember that it is easier to tolerate nylon than polyesters. It is best to use washable cotton rugs or bare floors.

If the flooring is plywood, it would be a good idea to cover it with a barrier cloth or mylar "space blanket" because plywood is glued together with petrochemical glues and resins. If the flooring is vinyl, cover it with barrier cloth unless it is old and the odors have already been completely released. Ceramic tile floors are best, particularly if the grout is old. Wash the floors thoroughly with borax or baking soda and water.

Although you would like your oasis to be clean and fresh, this is definitely not the time to repaint the walls. Instead, clean the walls by washing them either with borax or with a combination of baking soda and water. Do not use a room that has vinyl wallpaper or wallpaper that was applied with adhesives containing insecticides. Unsealed pine surfaces should be covered with barrier cloth.

If it is necessary for privacy, your windows may be covered with washable cotton curtains. Organic cotton sheets can be used to make practical, washable, and attractive draperies.

Every bit of clothing should be removed from the room's closet. While you are in your oasis, wear only cotton clothing and store only cotton clothing in the closets. Do not allow polyester or polyester blend clothing to remain in the room. No woolen or dry cleaned articles should be allowed to remain in the room because the formaldehyde cleaning solution lingers on the clothing. When all these precautions have been taken, it is time to return only those furnishings that are absolutely necessary for comfort and daily use. Limit the furnishings. In furnishing the oasis, it is best to imagine that you are discarding a plush, cluttered, overstuffed Victorian ambience in favor of one that is more nearly contemporary, scaled down, uncluttered, and clean lined.

Select a bed frame that is all metal or wood and be sure that it has been thoroughly cleaned with borax or baking soda and water. Or, if necessary, the mattress can be placed directly on the floor. The mattress, pillows, and box springs should not contain sponge rubber, urethane foam, or any other synthetic fabrics. The best choice is a 100 percent organic cotton mattress. Several varieties are available. If you cannot replace your mattress, enclose the mattress and box springs with a space blanket that is sealed at the seams or with one of the new mattress coverings available for this purpose.

Do not use blankets or sheets made of synthetic fabrics. Use 100 percent cotton materials that have not been treated to be "permanent press." White or natural fabrics are best because the dyes in colored or printed sheets may have offensive odors.

If possible, bed pillows should also be 100 percent organic cotton covered with 100 percent cotton pillowcases. If cotton pillows are not available, place several folded cotton towels in a pillowcase. Freshly laundered down or feather pillows are acceptable for use by those people who are not sensitive to feathers.

A table or desk should be made of wood, glass, or metal. If plastic TV tables are brought into the oasis, test for reactions if symptoms are at base line.

Use wooden chairs. Soften them with cotton-filled, washable fabric chair pads. If your only available chairs are upholstered with vinyl, the vinyl area should be covered with barrier cloth and sealed.

Lamps with ceramic, glass, or wooden bases are best. Do not use plastic lamp bases or plastic shades that can give off odors when they heat. Clean lamps thoroughly with borax or baking soda and water.

You may have a hard plastic clock and a hard plastic radio and tape player. It would be advisable to run a new TV set outside your oasis for several days to allow odors to be released. Remember to move all these appliances from the oasis before retiring for the night. The telephone can become a problem because, after a while, you may be able to smell or even taste its plastic fumes. Cover the mouthpiece with a clean cotton sock. This telephone "slipcover" should prevent discomfort.

As you begin to be more comfortable in your oasis, it is perfectly natural that you will want to experiment with more furnishings and add more of your normal comforts. Be careful not to bring in new items into the oasis without testing them. The most reasonable way to do this is to introduce one new item at a time. When you are sure you can tolerate that item, you may introduce another.

If you are sensitive to newsprint, read the newspaper only in a book box. Dust papers and books with baking soda to reduce acidic fumes.

If it is necessary for you to use a typewriter while you are in your oasis, remember not to type for long periods of time. Inks in the ribbon and film can provoke chemical stress. Of course you will want to remove the typewriter before you go to bed at night. The same restrictions should apply to your computer, printer, scanner, fax machine, and related equipment.

Do not accumulate books, papers, and newspapers inside the oasis. Store them somewhere else.

You will not keep cosmetics, perfumes, aftershave lotions, scented powders, or toiletries in the oasis, and it is important to remind friends and family members not to use these items when they visit.

Even though smokers may be considerate enough to smoke out of doors or even outside the house altogether, the odors of tobacco smoke remain in their clothing, on their skin, and in their hair. You can't afford to be kind or generous or loving. Smokers and the odors they bring with them simply cannot be welcomed into your oasis. If you live with a family of artists, sculptors, farmers, house painters, printers, or chemical workers, have them remain outside the oasis until they have showered and changed clothing. Their work clothes should be washed as soon as they are finished with them.

When your symptoms improve, you will be able to spend an increasingly longer time outside the oasis. Eventually you will be able to return to the outside world for the greatest part of your day, perhaps only retreating to your oasis at night or to recover after you have suffered a chemical insult.

### Home Environment

As you spend more time outside your oasis, it will become necessary to clean up your home to create a safe environment. Although the rest of your house may not have to be as Spartan as the inside of your oasis, this is going to involve the most drastic and traumatic spring cleaning you have ever undertaken in your life. It will be considerably more complicated than merely dusting under the beds and washing the windows.

Start at one end of the house and work your way to the other end. Your goal is to reach a symptom-free base line for other parts of your home outside your oasis. Once a symptom-free base line is reached, you will have achieved an "ecologically safe" home.

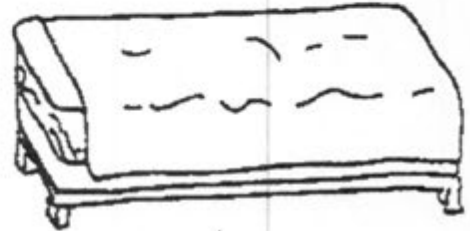
To do this, you will have to isolate home exposures so that you can avoid them or remove them. If you suspect an item such as carpeting, put a fair amount of it in a closed room that is free of other fumes. Leave it there for a week. After a week you can test yourself by sitting

## GUIDELINES TO MAKE AN ENVIRONMENTAL SAFE BED

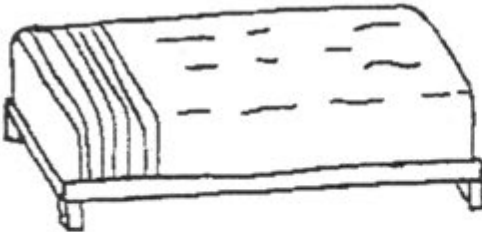
1. Bed frame – no pine wood
2. 6-10 cotton blankets
3. A barrier cloth sheet cover
4. 1 regular cotton bottom sheet
5. 1 regular cotton top sheet



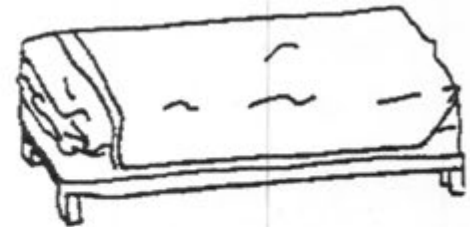
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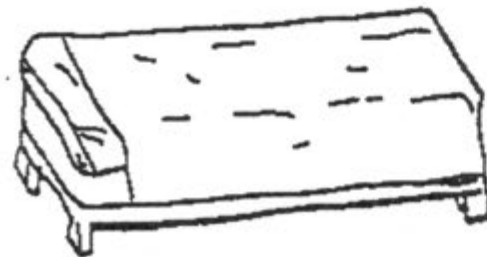
4. 1 regular cotton bottom sheet



2. 6 – 10 cotton blankets



5. 1 regular cotton top sheet



3. A barrier cloth sheet cover

### Advantages:

1. Dust Free
2. Mold Free
3. Chemical Free
4. All Parts Washable

### Disadvantages of New Mattress:

1. Mattress often fire proofed with synthetic fillers (i.e., foam, polyester)
2. An herbicided unwashed cotton is usually used.

**Do's and Don't**

**In the Bedroom**

1. Do use a cotton towel for a pillow. It can be washed frequently.
  2. Do keep all clothes in closed closets or drawers, never lying about the room. If highly chemically sensitive, remove clothes from bedroom.
  3. Do use lightweight, washable cotton curtains.
  4. Do keep all doors and windows in this room closed.
  5. Do select bedding carefully: natural fabrics such as cotton are usually well tolerated.
  6. Do use filter or damp cheesecloth over vents to reduce dust circulation.
  7. Do change air duct filters frequently.
  8. Do vacuum frequently, although carpeting is not recommended.
  9. Do choose furnishings simple in design, while avoiding stuffed upholstered furniture.
  10. Do use a slightly damp cloth for dusting.
  11. Do a thorough and complete cleaning once a week.
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1. **Don't** allow smoking.
  2. **Don't** allow animals, birds, or reptiles in this room.
  3. **Don't** have heavy draperies.
  4. **Don't** use chenille bedspreads, fuzzy blankets, etc.
  5. **Don't** store anything under the bed.
  6. **Don't** allow pennants, pictures, books, or other dust catchers.
  7. **Don't** use mothballs, insect sprays or deodorizers.
  8. **Don't** use perfumes, talc, or other cosmetics in this room.
  9. **Don't** keep stuffed animals or other toys in this room.
  10. **Don't** use paste wax on the floor.
  11. **Don't** have carpeting in this room
  12. **Don't** allow molds to grow in dark, damp areas. Keep cellars, clothing closets, etc. well dried, aired, and lighted.
  13. **Don't** put damp shoes, boots and sneakers in closet. They will rapidly breed mold if not allowed to "air out" and dry.
  14. **Don't** allow shower curtain to remain bunched up or stuck to wall or tub. It may mildew.
  15. **Don't** allow clothing to remain damp; dry immediately after laundering.
  16. **Don't** allow clothes hamper to fill with damp, soiled clothing.



**In the Home**

1. Do be aware that indoor plants may breed mold in their potting soil and on their stems. Also, dried flowers often contain mold, dust, and dust mites.
2. Do keep closets, dresser drawers, basements, bathroom, and windowsills as clean as possible.
3. Do occasionally, on warm, dry days, sun and air articles stored in the closet.
4. Do wash tiles and grout frequently. Check corner areas, areas under the sink and behind toilet for mold growth. Bathrooms are popular havens for mold.
5. Do check humidifiers, air conditioners, and vaporizers constantly for a musty smell. Clean them frequently.
6. Do vent the clothes dryer to the outside to help prevent condensation of moisture that leads to mold growth.
7. Do check stored foods for possible spoilage and mold growth.
8. **Don't** allow heavy vegetation to grow on the house as it encourages dampness and mold growth.
9. **Don't** allow fallen leaves to stay on the lawn. Mold and smut will soon flourish on them.

**In the office**

1. Do remember that simplicity is the watchword in furniture, fixtures, and décor. Ornamentation greatly increases the number of dust-harboring surfaces.
2. Do be aware that drapes are dust catchers. Lightweight, washable curtains are best.
3. Do clean the permanent, climate control filter or the disposal filter monthly.
4. Do be aware that pencil-sharpener dust is frequently a troublemaker.
5. Do keep books in a closed bookcase or closet. They are notorious collectors of mold and dust.
6. Do have factory office doors weather-stripped to minimize industrial odors, fumes, and dust.
7. **Don't** open windows except on days of low air pollution, pollen, dust, and mold. Be sure windows fit tightly to seal out airborne incitants.
8. **Don't** be reluctant to let others know that smoking is not allowed.
9. **Don't** keep air too warm or cool, too damp or dry. Confine humidity and temperature to a healthy, comfortable range.
10. **Don't** work in a confined area with copying machines and other office machinery. These fumes may be enough to provoke your sensitivity.
11. **Don't** allow felt-tip markers, glue, inks, etc. to clutter the desk. Keep them in closed drawers.