

GREEN HOUSE

Sick Building Syndrome takes time to appear

By Dan Howard

FOR TRIB TOTAL MEDIA

Even if you have not personally experienced Sick Building Syndrome (SBS), you probably know at least one person suffering with an illness that appears to be the result of indoor environmental exposures. Some people use the term "MCS" (Multiple Chemical Sensitivity) instead of SBS. No matter what you call it, the effects of environmental exposures can range from inconvenient to devastating for victims and their loved ones.

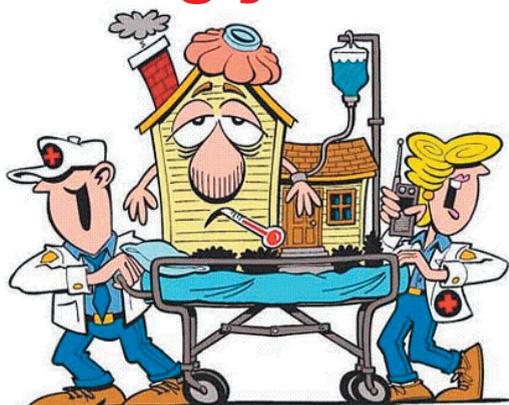
Solving the riddle of what the cause or the remedy for Sick Building Syndrome can become a lifetime struggle. If you ask what is the relationship between our bodies and the environment, the answer is the same as many relationships in life: It's complicated! Too often we do not get to the bottom of "complicated."

Tough to figure out

The first barrier to solving the healthy environment problem is that most environmental reactions happen in time delay. Our brain wiring is much better looking at things as cause-effect when they are occurring together. If we touch a burner on the stove, we feel pain. If we hit our thumb with hammer, we immediately feel the consequences of that action. We learn in real time that for those actions there is a predictable, consistent reaction. We also figure out to not do those things again.

Environmental exposures usually take time. We walk into a contamination, and may not feel ill for the first hours, days or weeks. Often, we do not become ill from an exposure for years until our immunity is affected by another illness or aging.

Our bodies work hard to keep us from having health problems from short-term

Could your house be making you sick?

or low-level exposures to toxins. As an example, most municipal water authorities have traces of arsenic in the water we drink. Our bodies can usually process the small amount of arsenic, and we get on with life with little disruption. Our liver and kidneys can push small amounts of the arsenic out of our bodies and lives. If we open a jar of arsenic and consume a large amount of arsenic at one time, we can become very ill if not dead.

"Time loading" is how environmental illness often occurs. What that means is that if we have a little arsenic each day, and we start accumulating more in our bodies so that the liver and kidneys cannot clean up that chemical mess, we will become ill. By the way, this explains why a person who spends more time in a sick building can become sick and others who spend less time there are not affected.

Every exposure matters

General environmental health is the combination of all of the exposures we have each experienced. The air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink and the things we touch can all affect our health. The combination of

those influences, genetics and the exposures we have had across a lifetime can influence our health. Thousands of new chemicals have been created. The medicines we take can change our bodies and make what were safe exposures into life-threatening problems.

We do not know the long-term effects of all of the exposures we have experienced. Past history has taught us that serious health risks may not be recognized, and even after they are identified, "covered up."

Smoking was a fixture of society. Our culture 50 years ago was that you got a "smoke break" if you smoked. You got to keep working if you didn't. It was a social time for people at work, in the military, or even in schools.

Asbestos was mandated in public buildings for fire safety. The workers building everything from schools to military ships were proud workers who believed they were serving public safety.

In both instances, medical professionals figured out the cancer link and attorneys and companies spent millions in trying to cover up that link. History repeats itself. The lead-contaminated water in Flint and thousands of other

American cities are today's examples.

Then there are the regulations for energy saving that have created too tight indoor air conditions that in many instances make people sick.

Failure of agencies to monitor offshore production of building materials have allowed materials with toxic levels of chemicals into the country. Lumber Liquidators and formaldehyde is a recent example.

The story here is that even when some of the things that make us ill are identified, there are efforts to hide the fact that they can affect our health. It happens at many levels, and government, even the very agencies established to keep us healthy, are a part of the problem.

Avoidance the best tool

"Avoidance" of hazards is usually the simplest treatment for environmental illness. It is also probably the most underused and undervalued treatment today. It is listed as a treatment in medical journals, and yet we spend little if any attention to it in the treatment process.

To avoid what is making you sick, you must first identify the cause. A great tool for this is keeping a diary of how you feel, where you go and what you eat. That method can show that after a visit to a particular building, riding in and automobile, eating a particular food or other event occurs, we become ill in 6 or 10 or maybe even 12 hours. This helps us identify the patterns that happen in "time delay." This can be a life changing investigative tool for better health.

Good health is a precious commodity, but not a given. The work of identifying and correcting the causes robbing you of that good health is an investment in

the quality of life. If you do not have the tools to figure out what is happening in a building, there are professionals that can help.

Go to www.EnviroSpect.com info/SBSExplained for more links and additional information about Sick Building Syndrome and its effects on

your health.

Dan Howard is the owner of EnviroSpect. For environmental consultation, call 724-443-6653. For more information, visit their website at www.EnviroSpect.com Email questions to: DanielJHowardJr@gmail.com Like us on Facebook or connect @DanHoward251.





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