

FACT SHEET

WHAT IS MULTIPLE CHEMICAL SENSITIVITIES (MCS)?

Also called Environmental Sensitivities/Intolerances, it means an unusually severe sensitivity or allergy-like reaction to many different kinds of pollutants such as chemicals and perfumes and other environmental triggers. Other symptoms include feeling dizzy or groggy, headache, balance problems and difficulty concentrating.

WHAT IS MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS/CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME (ME/CFS)?

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis is a severe chronic illness commonly known as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome; it is also called ME or CFS. A person with ME/CFS is plagued by profound debilitating fatigue that is not improved by bed rest and is usually worsened by physical and mental activity. This illness affects the brain, central nervous system, heart, muscles and endocrine system. It is considered a neurological and an immune system disorder. Other symptoms include decreased memory and concentration, sensitivity to noise, light and sound, dizziness, balance problems and muscle and joint pain. Patients who have ME/CFS often also live with Fibromyalgia and/or Multiple Chemical Sensitivities.

WHAT IS FIBROMYALGIA (FM)?

Fibromyalgia is a chronic condition characterized by intense widespread pain in muscles, ligaments and tendons. There are multiple tender points – places on the body where the slightest pressure causes pain. Other symptoms include fatigue, poor memory, concentration and poor co-ordination.

IMPACT ON THOSE LIVING WITH MCS, ME/CFS and/or FM

The majority of people living with MCS, ME/CFS and/or FM cannot work or go to school for long periods of time and many must give up their jobs, often for life. Their incomes drop drastically and many live on disability support. The social cost of these illnesses can also be very high: family and financial stresses, lost dreams and relationships. Although some people may recover, most adults never fully recover and there are many Canadians living with these illnesses for 20 years or more. Children can also be affected. Early diagnosis, combined with good healthcare and support from family, friends and workplaces are essential to increasing the chances for people to recover.