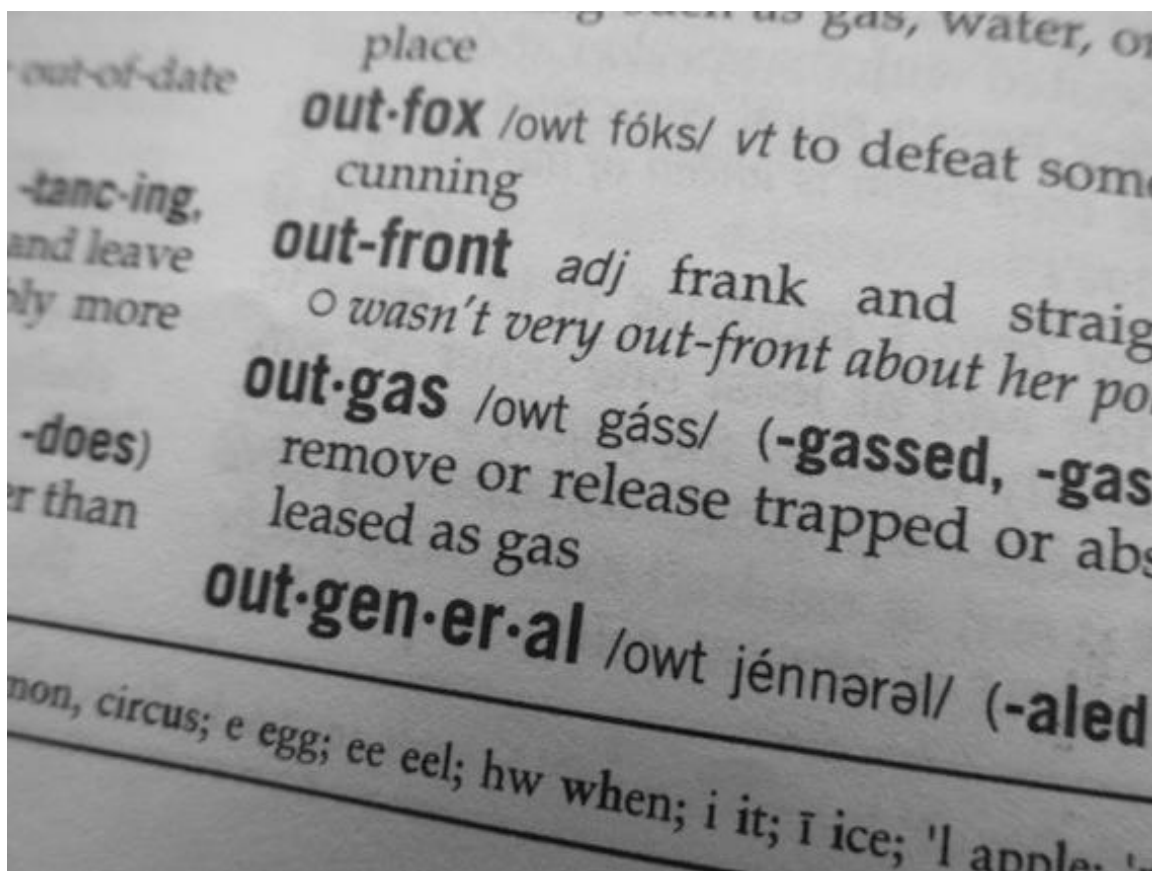


The Environmental Illness dictionary



People with environmental illnesses (chemical and electrical sensitivities) have their own lingo, reflecting life with these illnesses.

Keywords: environmental illness, environmental sensitivity, multiple chemical sensitivity, electrical sensitivity, MCS, dictionary, lingo, slang, terminology

Most groups of people have their own lingo with unique words and some words that are used differently. For instance, the word "toxic" has slightly different meaning when used by a chemist, a psychologist, an investment banker and someone with environmental illness.

Here we provide a translation of common terms used in the EI world, which also provides a glimpse of daily life with these illnesses. The usage does vary some by region.

Analog: without digital electronics, which is less tolerated by people with electrical sensitivities. An incandescent light bulb is analog, while an LED bulb is not.

Bake-out: heating something up to make it offgas the toxic chemicals faster. Slow for materials that have deeply embedded chemicals, such as manufactured wood products (plywood, particle board, etc.). The method is sometimes used for entire buildings, where the indoor temperature is raised for two or three days.

Barrel effect: the theory that the human body is like a rain barrel with a small outlet hole. If too much water gets in, faster than it can run out, the barrel overflows. Similarly, some people's ability to break down chemicals cannot keep up with their intake through air, food and skin contact. If it becomes too much, the "barrel" overflows and sickness starts. Sometimes referred to as the "rain barrel."

Brain fog: the "cloudy" mind that people with MCS often get when exposed to chemicals. The term is very descriptive of what it feels like. People who go through chemotherapy for cancer may also experience it, though they call it "chemo fog."

Chemie: a person with multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS).

Civilian: a person who does not have MCS or EHS. Was popular slang around year 2000, but is no longer in use.

Closet EI: a person with MCS or EHS who outwardly appears to live the normal toxic lifestyle. Usually a semi-chemie.

Clean: a person, material or device that has no odor at all, or may just have a light natural smell.

Cleaning up: the process of making a person odorless. This involves changing personal care products, laundry products, detoxing the wardrobe and letting the body eliminate stored toxic chemicals. The process takes from a few weeks to many months depending on how toxic a lifestyle the person used to live, and the resistance to change.

Dirty electricity: high frequency signals that travel on electrical wires and radiate off these wires. Caused by most types of electronics and low-energy lamps. In the technical world it is called, "transients," "noise" or "conducted emissions."

Dot dose: a smidgen of a pharmaceutical drug. Commonly used when first trying a drug to avoid a major reaction if the drug is not tolerable.

EI: environmental illness. Sometimes referring to just MCS, or to both MCS and EHS. Also used to denote a person with one or both of these illnesses. Some also include people who are sensitized to light, sound or vibrations.

EI premium: people with environmental illnesses are sometimes charged a special markup, because they are sick and desperate. An example is that an old car, which happens not to be toxic inside, can command a higher price than a normie would pay.

Electrical sensitivity: also referred to as electrical hypersensitivity, electromagnetic hypersensitivity and similar names. Shortened to EHS and other acronyms. A poorly understood illness where a person has mild to severe symptoms from exposure to low levels of electromagnetic radiation that is not noticeable by healthy people. The symptoms vary with the person but are mostly neurological, and may include various skin symptoms (flushing, tingling, burning), headaches, joint pain/swelling, sleep problems, restlessness, memory problems, concentration issues and more.

Electrosmog: ambient pollution with radio-frequency radiation from mobile phone base stations, wireless networks, radio transmitters, etc. Similar to chemical smog, but invisible and odorless.

EMF: electromagnetic field. The type of radiation coming from power lines, household wiring, cellular base stations, wireless networks and all kinds of wireless devices. At low frequencies, such as around power lines, it is divided into magnetic and electric fields.

EMS: an alternative name for electrical hypersensitivity that is popular among some activists in the United States.

Environmental Sensitivity: the same as environmental illness, encompassing both MCS and EHS. This name is mostly used in Canada.

Faraday cage: a metal enclosure that shields against electromagnetic radiation, such as from cellular towers and wireless networks. It can be freestanding or built into the walls and ceilings of a house. Commonly used to protect people sleeping. Invented by British physicist Michael Faraday (1791-1867).

Flicker sensitivity: sensitivity to flickering lights, such as fluorescent lighting, computer screens, spinning wind turbines, etc. Also seen in people with epilepsy.

Fried: to be strongly affected by exposures to electromagnetic fields (EMF), such as from wireless devices. The effects vary, but includes the sensation of heat or even burning.

Fried dust: dust that has collected on a heating surface and is then heated up so it gives off noxious fumes. A particular problem when air-furnaces and electric space heaters are turned on the first time after collecting dust over the summer.

Gaslighting, medical gaslighting: when a doctor erroneously states that a patient's illness is all psychological or downplays major symptoms. Happens especially often to women. Also happens with other diseases than EI, especially gynecological problems.

Guest clothes: clothes kept for use by guests who arrive wearing toxic clothes.

Gulf War illness: the sickness that affected thousands of soldiers who were deployed in the 1990-1991 Operation Desert Shield/Operation Desert Storm. This illness may be identical to MCS.

Healthy house: a house built or modified to create an exceptionally good indoor air quality. This is done by careful selection of building materials to avoid chemical fumes and mold problems. Some houses are also designed to reduce the electromagnetic radiation.

Hit: to be sickened by an exposure to toxic chemicals or EMF. Usage: to take a hit. See also: whacked.

Horizontal hostility: when oppressed people blame other oppressed people instead of real causes. Example is someone with MCS who is a racist or homophobe, or who demeans someone else's MCS.

Idiopathic environmental intolerance: often shortened to IEI, or used as IEI-MCS and IEI-EMF. The same as environmental illness/MCS/EHS, but used to distance the illnesses from their cause by special interests. It was coined and promoted by forces aligned with the chemical industry in 1996. It is mostly used in documents falsely claiming MCS and EHS are psychological illnesses. The name has never been endorsed by the World Health Organization, contrary to some propaganda.

Invisible disability: a disability that is not visually apparent, unlike a person missing a limb or using a wheel chair. People with invisible disabilities are often treated with less understanding, as they outwardly appear "just fine." Examples of invisible disabilities are diabetes, heart disease, chronic fatigue syndrome, endometriosis, MCS and EHS.

Junk science: scientific claims that are not based on proper science. The term is mostly used to mislabel any science that threatens special interests, such as corporate profits. These same voices also tend to oppose public funding for science that could clarify a controversy. Their argument is that the issue is settled, so why spend any money.

Kill switch: a double-poled switch that disconnects both phase and neutral electrical wires to a room or a device. This lowers the electrical field and sometimes other types of EMF.

Less-toxic: refers to anything generally considered non-toxic and odor free, and thus safe to be around for most people with MCS. The term is used instead of "safe" to recognize that there really is nothing that is completely safe for everybody.

Light sensitivity: sensitivity to some form of light, such as bright sunlight, indoor lights or light of a specific color (especially blue).

Low-impact cooking: a method to lessen bothersome cooking odors. Food is cooked slower at lower heat; frying is avoided.

Masking: when the body adjusts to ongoing chemical or EMF exposures and more or less stops complaining. For people with MCS or EHS, the symptoms may calm down and become chronic. There are often long-term health effects, such as increased sensitivity later on. People who smoke or use fragrances are masked and cannot themselves tell how much they actually smell. See also: unmasking.

Mono meal: a meal consisting of just one ingredient. Used by people with widespread food allergies, or when testing food for tolerance.

Multiple chemical sensitivity: often shortened to "chemical sensitivity" or MCS. The illness where a person is adversely affected by natural and/or synthetic chemicals at concentrations not affecting the general population. The symptoms vary with the person, but usually involve multiple bodily systems, such as the neurological, gastrointestinal, immunological, musculoskeletal and other systems.

Normal or **Normie**: a person who does not have MCS or EHS.

Oasis: a room that is free of air pollution, usually a bedroom. Typically has furniture and bedding of natural materials, no carpets and minimal storage of clothes, etc. See also: sleeping cage.

Offgassing: chemical fumes released from some material or a person. People with MCS often leave new purchases outside or in a special room or shed to offgas before taking them into the living space. Heat increases offgassing and thereby shortens the time before the item can be tolerated. Persons with chemicals stored in them can sometimes be offgassed by sweating (sometimes using a sauna).

Outgassing: same as offgassing. This word is no longer used much in the EI world, but is widely used in the technical world.

Perma-chemmed: some item that cannot be detoxed by any means without destroying it. Clothing that has been treated with dryer sheets are often perma-chemmed.

Pill-doctor: derogatory term for a physician who focuses on doling out pills to treat the symptoms rather than looking for the cause of the illness. Most physicians in the United States are pill-doctors.

Quiet: when the electromagnetic radiation is exceptionally low, where people with severe EHS can feel a calm they can't feel elsewhere. May require going to a remote area with no electrical service.

Reading bag: a bag of plastic or cellophane containing a book or magazine to protect the reader against the fumes. Reading boxes (see below) offer better protection.

Reading box: a box made of glass, plastic, aluminum or wood with a see-through top. It encloses a book or magazine to protect the reader against the fumes. There are several versions; some use an electric exhaust fan, some are non-electric.

Runner: someone with MCS or EHS who rapidly travels from place to place in the desperate hope of finding the perfect place without any triggers of their symptoms. They tend to move so fast their symptoms have no chance of simmering down. Actual "runners" are very few in number.

Safe: refers to a person, a place or some item that is non-toxic/non-radiating and thus safe for nearly all people. The term "safer" is often used instead to indicate that nothing is truly safe for everybody. See also: less-toxic.

Scanmail: when a (usually handwritten) note is scanned and saved to a file, which is then e-mailed. This method is used by people who do not tolerate computers.

Self-diagnosed: a person who has not been officially diagnosed by a physician. Usually used by certain media as a slur, regardless whether the person is diagnosed by a physician or not. Some people are unable to afford a proper diagnosis, as the lab tests are expensive.

Semi-chemie: a person who is on the milder end of the MCS spectrum. Is usually able to work and interact with regular people with few or no precautions. Most chemically sensitive people are semi-chemies.

Sick building: a building that makes people sick because of poor indoor air quality. This can be a combination of poor ventilation, chemical offgassing and mold infestation. People who get sick in just one building may have mild MCS, or may not have MCS.

Skunk mail: perfumed letter or mail containing samples of soaps, fragrances or fabric softener.

Sleeping cage: an outdoor sleeping area with a roof. The walls are made of netting for maximum ventilation and protection against insects.

Social distancing: keeping extra distance to normal people to avoid their fragrances, radiation from portable electronics, etc. Practiced for decades before there was a name for it.

Sound sensitivity: sensitivity to sounds, such as noise, distorted sound or music. In very rare cases a person can be sensitive to any kind of sound.

Spreading: people with MCS tend to initially be sensitive to just one or two classes of chemicals, such as pesticides or fragrances. Over time the sensitivities tend to spread to other unrelated classes of chemicals.

Store smell: the smell of a store, which varies with each store. Clothes worn into a store will smell like that store. Normies are generally unaware of this.

Stray electricity: is when electricity runs along metal water pipes, metal air ducts, through the safety ground or other paths where it is not intended. This causes imbalanced electrical circuits and elevated magnetic fields.

Terpenes: natural chemicals emitted from trees and plants. Released through evaporation (the smell of a pine forest) or when breaking the plant (fresh cut grass). Can make people sick just like synthetic chemicals.

Town clothes: a set of clothes used for going shopping and not used at home or when visiting other non-toxic households. Clothes worn to stores can be difficult to clean enough to not affect someone with severe MCS.

Toxin: a natural poison, such as snake venom. Not a synthetic chemical.

Toxic: anything that stinks of chemicals, such as fragrances.

Toxicant: a toxic chemical, such as a pesticide.

Toxic drift: chemicals wafting in from the neighbors, such as dryer exhaust, smells coming out through open windows, use of yard chemicals etc. Also refers to agricultural sprayings.

Universal reactor: a person with MCS who reacts to basically all types of natural and artificial substances, such as foods, pollen, terpenes, plastics, fragrances, pesticides, laundry products, solvents, etc.

Unmasking: when a person ceases chronic exposures to something, such as fragrances, and then realizes it was the cause of chronic symptoms. This can be a very rude awakening for people with MCS and EHS.

Whacked: the effects of a toxic exposure. Usage: I got whacked walking into that store.

More information

More articles about the EI lifestyle are available on www.eiwellspring.org/intromenu.html.

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