

Some common indoor air quality problems and possible causes

Source: AIHA: The IAQ Investigation Guide 2006

	Complaint	Symptoms Might Include	Possible Causes
1	Sick Building Syndrome	Headaches, irritation, congestion, fatigue	Not related to sources of emission or contamination
2	Allergic Reactions	Swelling, itching, congestion, asthma	Unsanitary conditions (excessive dust or mold growth)
3	Hypersensitivity illness	Cough, shortness of breath, fever, chills, fatigue	Repeated exposure to microbial aerosols
4	Irritation	Watering, burning or dryness of eyes, nose, or throat, may be accompanied by other nonspecific symptoms such as headache, nausea, or fatigue	Excessive concentrations of volatile chemicals such as solvents or formaldehyde; might also be because of very dry air
	Carbon Monoxide Poisoning	Headache, dizziness, discoloration positive blood test, nausea, coma	Uncontrolled combustion
5	Neurological	Headaches, tremors, loss of memory	Insecticide misuse
6	Infections	Diagnosed infections such as Legionnaire's or Aspergillosis	Should be related to specific contaminant in building
7	Comfort (thermal)	Too hot, too cold, too stuffy, too drafty	HVAC
8	Comfort (nuisance)	No symptoms, just concern for unusual odor or other conditions	Inadequate control of source emissions or contamination

9	Psychosocial Stressors	Headaches, fatigue, muscle aches	Poor labor relations, overcrowding, unrelated concerns
10	Mass Psychogenic Illness	Hyperventilation, fainting, skin irritation	Symptoms spread by power of suggestion
11	Ergonomic Problems	Muscle aches, fatigue, eyestrain, headaches	Uncomfortable seating, repetitive motion
12	Lighting	Eyestrain, headaches concentration	Annoying noise interferes with
13	Cluster of Adverse Health Effects	Any disease or health event that occurs in a building	Might be contagious hereditary, etc., might not be related to IAQ

For more information, see the EH&S Indoor Air Quality Program. If you have questions please contact EH&S office at (252) 328-6166.