

(Diamox), hydrochlorothiazide/triamtene (Dyazide) and hydrochlorothiazide (HydroDIURIL)—to help the kidneys excrete excess fluids. This can help prevent further attacks of Ménière's disease.

ENVIRONMENTAL TOXINS

We're all exposed to environmental toxins, but certain people may have a sensitivity that causes dizziness.

Toxins can be found in the air (carbon monoxide from cigarette smoke and automobile exhaust) ...food (pesticide residues on produce)...and water (petroleum products or other pollutants that seep into groundwater).

If your doctor can't identify a specific problem through a physical exam, environmental causes should be considered.

Some blood tests can detect harmful levels of carbon monoxide, but the best approach is to reduce exposure to as many chemicals as possible to see if it makes a difference. *Helpful...*


Do not smoke. If you do, consult your physician for smoking-cessation strategies. Also, avoid second-hand smoke.

Wash produce. Remove pesticides from all fruits and vegetables by rinsing thoroughly. Whenever possible, use organic products.

Drink bottled water. If you are unsure of the quality of the water from your tap, drink bottled or purified water.

GETTING ADDITIONAL HELP

If your doctor is unable to identify a cause for your dizziness, see an otolaryngologist (a physician who specializes in disorders of the ear and larynx) or a neurotologist (a physician who specializes in the management of hearing and balance disorders).

To find an otolaryngologist or neurotologist in your area, contact the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, 703-836-4444, www.entnet.org. 

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Help for Chronic Sinus Infections

Often-overlooked triggers can make you suffer needlessly.

Sinus inflammation or infection (sinusitis) typically begins with a cold or an allergy attack that impedes the normal flow of mucus. Mucous buildup creates a favorable environment for infection to set in. Patients who reduce their congestion promptly often can avoid sinusitis or at least heal it more quickly.

However: Few people—and even some doctors—fail to realize that other, less obvious causes can trigger sinusitis...

FUNGUS

About 92% of patients with chronic sinusitis (lasting 12 weeks or longer) have fungus in their nasal mucus. New research suggests that the majority of patients with nonviral sinusitis have both fungal and bacterial infections.

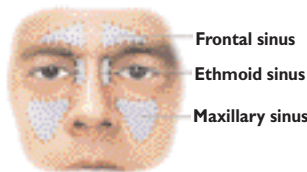
The majority of fungal infections are believed to be due to household mold or mold found in public places, such as restaurants, gyms, movie theaters, etc.

To determine the type of infection, doctors should take a history, give a physical exam and, in some

cases, order a computed tomography (CT) scan and/or sinus culture. Antibiotics and/or antifungal medications, such as *itraconazole* (Sporanox), will clear the initial infection in about two weeks in patients with acute sinusitis (lasting less than 12 weeks). Patients with chronic sinusitis may need to take the drugs for up to 12 weeks. Even in the absence of infection, a mold allergy can cause congestion that leads to sinusitis.

What are SINUSES?

The nose is surrounded by sinuses, hollow cavities lined with mucous-producing membranes that heat, humidify and filter air on its way from the nose to the lungs. The sinuses produce a lot of mucus—about one liter daily—which traps dirt, bacteria, mold and dust. The mucus drains through openings in the sinuses and eventually runs down the back of the throat. The openings, typically smaller than one millimeter in diameter, are easily obstructed by infection, allergy, irritation and/or polyps.



Helpful: Be vigilant about inspecting your home for mold and remove it promptly. (To read more about household mold, see Dr. Jamison Starbuck's column on page 10.)

Also: Clean your car. The combination of heat and trapped moisture provides an ideal environment for mold growth.

NASAL POLYPS

These benign tumors in the sinus cavity can be as small as the tip of a ballpoint pen or

Bottom Line/Health interviewed Jordan S. Josephson, MD, attending physician at Manhattan Eye, Ear and Throat Hospital and a sinus specialist and functional endoscopic sinus surgeon in private practice, both in New York City.





JAMISON STARBUCK, ND

The Whole Truth About Mold in Your Home



For several years, the news media have carried a variety of scare stories about toxic black mold, a greenish black fungus known as *Stachybotrys chartarum*. Some people who say they've been exposed to this mold in their homes now suffer from debilitating fatigue, severe joint pain, brain damage and a variety of other ailments. The only problem is, there's little scientific evidence at this point to definitively link mold

to these serious health problems.

However, scientific research clearly states that the spores released by mold can trigger allergy attacks, asthma, itchy eyes, a chronic runny nose and/or sinusitis.

Here's how to protect yourself from these troublesome complaints...

Do a home check. If you—or someone you live with—have any of the conditions described above, do a mold check of your home. Get a bright flashlight and inspect damp areas, including the basement floor and walls, bathroom, door and window frames and sills, the floor and walls around pipes, and any place where moisture has accumulated. Look carefully at your shower curtains and linen closet. Mold is usually visible—white, green or black, slightly fuzzy, and clustered in single or multiple patches—or can be detected by its musty scent.

Important: When you're inspecting and cleaning your house, protect yourself from mold spores by wearing latex gloves, a mask (a carbon-filter respiration model is ideal) and goggles.

Focus on carpeting. If your carpeting is more than 10 years old—or it just smells moldy—check it carefully. Pull up the section of carpeting most likely to have gotten damp, including areas near windows, radiators and bathrooms. If one section is moldy, replace all the carpeting in that room. Do *not* install carpeting in the kitchen or bathroom. If you have carpeting in these areas, remove it and install hard flooring (wood, tile or resilient vinyl), which can easily be washed and dried.

Remove mold. Don't go overboard by using cleaning solutions that are more toxic than your mold. Hot, soapy water is adequate for washing. Kill any remaining mold by wiping the area with a rag saturated with undiluted white vinegar. Then use a dry cloth to remove all moisture from your work area.

Control humidity in your home. Because dampness leads to mold growth, indoor humidity should not exceed 50%. To measure humidity levels, buy a humidity meter, available in hardware stores for about \$8. To reduce humidity, use a bathroom fan whenever you shower, a kitchen fan when cooking and promptly dry water spills or leaks. If you live in a humid climate, consider using a dehumidifier and/or air conditioning for the hottest months.

For more information, go to the Environmental Protection Agency's Web site, www.epa.gov, and enter the term "mold" in the search line. Or call the EPA at 800-438-4318.

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as large as a grape. Even small polyps can obstruct sinus openings, which can allow sinusitis to develop. Polyps are diagnosed with a CT scan or endoscopy, an outpatient procedure during which a flexible, lighted tube is used to examine the nasal passages.

Most polyps are caused by inflammation, usually due to allergies, infection or exposure to smoke or other pollutants, such as household chemicals or dust. Once polyps form, they can block the sinus openings and trigger more inflammation—which can lead to even more polyps.

To reduce nasal polyps, you must break the inflammatory cycle. You may need nasal steroid sprays or oral steroids, such as *prednisone*, to reduce inflammation...and antibiotics and/or oral or spray antifungal drugs, to eliminate an underlying infection. If you have allergies, your doctor may recommend that you take antihistamines.

Polyps that trigger sinusitis may need to be surgically removed if drugs don't help. It's an outpatient procedure that can be done with local anesthesia. Polyps tend to recur, so medication still must be taken to control them.

DEVIATED SEPTUM

If the wall between the nostrils (the septum) is crooked because of injury or an anatomic abnormality, it can create air turbulence that irritates the sinus membranes and impedes normal drainage.

Warning signs: In addition to recurrent/persistent sinus infections, you may have difficulty breathing through your nose...snore loudly...or wake up with a dry mouth and chapped lips due to nighttime mouth breathing.

Patients with a deviated septum can try to prevent sinusitis by taking steps to reduce nasal congestion.

Helpful: Irrigate the nose with a premixed saline solution, sold in pharmacies, to reduce congestion and promote sinus drainage. Or

MOVING?
Change your address on our Web site
BottomLineSecrets.com/moving

make your own—it's easy and cheaper. Sterilize eight ounces of distilled water by boiling it briefly on the stove, then let it cool to room temperature. Add one-quarter teaspoon of salt to the water.

Important: Be sure to measure accurately. Too much or too little salt can damage mucous-producing cells in the nose.

Once or twice daily, use a Neti pot, sold in health-food stores, to pour the fluid into one nostril until it runs out the other nostril. Repeat the procedure on the other side.

If the above strategy doesn't help, you may need surgery to repair the septum. It's an outpatient procedure performed with local anesthesia and usually takes about one hour.

NOSE BLOWING

Blowing your nose hard can force mucus, and any germs it contains, into the sinus cavities.

Helpful: Blow one nostril at a time, by pressing one closed, then the other. This causes less pressure than blowing both nostrils at the same time.

Also, inhale deeply so that the mucus travels into your throat, where you can swallow it or spit it out. Most people don't like to do this, but it won't hurt you and does help move mucus and prevent sinusitis.

Is It a Cold Or Sinusitis?

See a doctor if you suspect you have sinusitis. The symptoms are similar to those caused by colds but not exactly the same. You may have sinusitis if...

- Mucus is white, yellow or green.
- You feel persistent pressure or pain around the nose, eyes, face and/or teeth.
- You breathe through your mouth and snore when you sleep.
- Symptoms last longer than one week.

Lisa Holtby

Simple Way to Build Strength and Boost Your Energy

Many people assume that yoga requires great strength and flexibility. Fortunately, that's just not true.

Because yoga gently stretches and works the muscles without the high impact of most aerobic exercise, even people who are in a weakened state due to illness can use it to build strength and flexibility, boost energy and promote circulation in the muscles and joints—all beneficial to healing.

The following regimen is appropriate for most adults, even those who suffer from chronic conditions, such as arthritis, diabetes, cancer or heart disease. Just be sure to consult your doctor before starting.

The program takes about 30 minutes and can be practiced daily.

Helpful: Record the instructions, or have someone read them to you.

RESTING POSE

What to do: Lie on your back on a mat or large towel with your arms at your sides, palms facing up, and your chin and forehead aligned horizontally. If your chin points upward, place a neatly rolled, small towel under your head and the back of your neck's natural curve.

Breathe slowly in and out. On your inhalations, draw air into the whole length of your lungs. Exhalations should be slightly longer than your inhalations. Maintain this breathing pattern during the

following exercises. Recline in the resting pose for five to 10 minutes. Then sit upright in a straight-backed chair to practice the following yoga poses.

Perform each pose for 10 to 20 long, slow breaths. On your inhalations, notice how your breath expands your ribcage. On your exhalations, move more deeply into the pose without straining.

SEATED MOUNTAIN

Purpose: Lengthens the spine, opens the chest and relaxes the shoulders.

What to do: Sit upright straight-backed chair, v feet flat and hip-width apart. Place your hands at the crease where your thighs meet your pelvis and lean your torso forward about 12 inches.

Tilt the front of your pelvis forward so that your lower back arches. While keeping a slight arch in your lower back, sit upright again. Press your tailbone downward. You will feel your abdominal muscles contract.

Then, rest your hands on the front of your thighs, palms down (pictured above). Gently roll your shoulders up, then back, so that your chest is open, and press your shoulder blades toward your back. Press down through your feet and lengthen down through



Bottom Line/Health interviewed Lisa Holtby, a Seattle-based yoga instructor for 11 years and the author of *Healing Yoga for People Living with Cancer* (Taylor), to be published in December.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY SHAWN BANNER