



To be diagnosed with CIRS/Mould Illness you need to have a multisystem, multi-symptom illness.

In research Dr. Shoemaker found that 35 health symptoms could be categorised into 13 clusters (Shoemaker et al., 2006). If a patient is confirmed to have 8 or more clusters of symptoms the likelihood of presence of CIRS exceeds 95%. A cluster is positive if you have one or more symptoms in each group. When combined with VCS deficits, symptom clusters can yield an accuracy of 98.5%, with false negatives < 2%. (Shoemaker et al, 2017). [Note clusters and VCS cannot differentiate CIRS-WDB from other CIRS causes such as CIRS-PLS (Post Lyme Syndrome)].

Dr. Shoemaker says that it's reasonable to do further testing if you are positive for 6+ symptom clusters (Berry, 2014).

Children

Dr. McMahon says that in children < 11 years they'll often have only 6+ symptom clusters while children 11+ years will have 8+ symptom clusters, as per adults. Very young children, < 5 years may present with only one symptom (e.g. chronic headaches, chronic fatigue, chronic abdominal pains, inability to potty train, ADHD) that will, if not treated, develop into the full CIRS multisystem, multi-symptom illness. ([Mold Illness and Children Webinar, 2017](#)).

CIRS Symptom Clusters		
Fatigue		Red Eyes
Weakness	Unusual skin sensitivity	Blurred Vision
Decreased assimilation of knowledge	Tingling	Sweats (night)
Aches		Mood Swings
Headache		Ice-pick Pain
Light Sensitivity		
Memory Impairment	Shortness of breath	Abdominal Pain
Decreased Word Finding	Sinus congestion	Diarrhea
		Numbness
Difficulty Concentrating	Cough	Tearing
	Excessive thirst	Disorientation
	Confusion	Metallic Taste
Joint Pain	Appetite Swings	Static Shocks
AM Stiffness	Difficulty regulating body temperature	Vertigo
Cramps	Increased urination	

Cluster table © R.Shoemaker

Cluster 1: Fatigue Related

Chronic fatigue

Do not recover after a night's sleep. Crash for days after doing what is normal for others before gathering enough energy to make another push to get work done.

Cluster 2: Muscle & Cognitive

Weakness

Physical muscle weakness. Can't remove twist-off lids, or lift that heavy bag of groceries.

Decreased assimilation of knowledge

Often have to re-read and read again to retain just a fraction of what would normally be retained.

Body aches

Some days are better than others, but it's hurting all over for no apparent reason.

Headaches/migraines

Can last for days of varying intensity but may be severe.

Light sensitivity

Bright light is very discomforting and may be overwhelming.

Cluster 3: Cognitive

Memory impairment

Can't remember more than one or two items in a list without making a serious effort. It may get so bad that within minutes you forget you were even trying to remember something.

Forget mid-sentence what you were about to say. Forgetting why you got up and went into another part of the house by the time you get there. Make a lot of lists.

Word recall

Frequently find yourself looking for relatively common words mid-sentence and often having to rephrase the sentence because you're unable to recall the missing word. Generally worse when tired or stressed.

Cluster 4: Concentration

Difficulty concentrating

Unable to stay focused. More easily distracted and lose track of what was being worked on more easily. May bounce from one task to the next without any direction. Mindlessly visit the same websites or click through Facebook and YouTube pages.

Cluster 5: Pain

Joint Pain

Some days are worse than others but pain is bad enough that you limit activity or can't sleep. May frequently take anti-inflammatory drugs like aspirin, ibuprofen, or naproxen sodium.

AM Stiffness

Waking up with stiffness in small and large joints that takes more than 15 minutes of movement to work out the kinks.

Cramps

Tend to get muscle spasms without exertion and may occur even during sleep.

Cluster 6: Nerve/Skin

Unusual skin sensations

Feelings of itching, burning, and skin crawling without any visible rash or skin abnormality.

Tingling

Prickly, tingling feelings often on the head but can be anywhere.

Cluster 7: Respiratory

Shortness of Breath

Even minor exertion leads to shortness of breath - carrying light objects, climbing stairs.

Sinus congestion

Thick post-nasal drip, sinusitis, or feeling stuffed up that reoccurs shortly after varying treatments.

Cluster 8: Various

Cough

Persistent/chronic cough for no apparent reason.

Confusion

Unable to think as quickly or with the usual level of clarity. May have difficulty following in-depth conversations or juggling as many variables or thoughts.

Excessive Thirst

Can't drink enough to ever feel quenched even after drinking a lot. Often feel parched and may take a water bottle everywhere. Related to low ADH.

Cluster 9: Various

Appetite swings

Hungry one day followed by disinterest in food or nausea the next.

Difficulty regulating temperature

Frequently having to add or remove clothing to keep from sweating or getting chilled. For examples, starting out with heavy bedding at bedtime that is removed later in the evening or being unable to step outside even briefly in the cold without experiencing deep chills.

Frequent urination

Drinking even as little as a cup of water results in a restroom stop shortly after. Wake up to go to the toilet several times during the night.

Cluster 10: Various

Red eyes

Eyes that appear irritated for no apparent reason.

Blurred vision

Unable to focus to the same level of sharpness or unable to see fine details that may vary from day to day. May include worse depth perception resulting in misstepping onto a curb.

Mood swings

Intolerant and quick to anger, depressed and weepy, joyful and loving, all in the same day or from one day to the next.

Ice pick pain

Brief, intense, sharp, stabbing pain that last for a few seconds occurs several or more times on a daily basis. The frequency and intensity may vary.

Night sweats

Sweating at any time of the day without exertion and frequently includes night sweats during sleep.

Cluster 11: GI & Nerve

Numbness

Commonly affecting the hands, feet, and face but may be anywhere.

Diarrhea

Watery or looser stools that may last for days or longer at a time.

Abdominal pain

Chronic nagging abdominal pain that varies in intensity. Can vary from pain over the entire abdomen to a persistent knot at the solar plexus to a dull ache over the kidneys.

Cluster 12: Various

Tearing

Persistent watery eyes as if welling up to cry with tears that may be thicker. May wake up with eyes crusted over.

Disorientation

Losing your bearings that may vary from not being able to remember how to make the daily commute home to being unsure where you are within a shopping center. Forgetting which way to turn at the end of the drive to get to a frequented destination.

Metallic taste

Tastes like there is a copper cent or silver twenty cent in your mouth.

Cluster 13: Various

Static Shocks

Constantly getting static shocks. Have developed strategies like always closing the car door with your sleeve protected arm to prevent getting shocked. May also include causing reception to drop out when walking by a radio.

Vertigo

Experience motion (usually spinning) when there is none. For example, feeling as if the car is moving when stopped at a red light.

Take the Biotoxin test at [Biotoxin Journey](#)

References

- Shoemaker, R.C., & House, D.E. (2006). Sick building syndrome (SBS) and exposure to water-damaged buildings: time series study, clinical trial and mechanisms. *Neurotoxicology and teratology*, 28(5), 573-88. PMID [17010568](#) | [Full text](#)
- Shoemaker, R.C., Johnson, K., Lysander, J., Berry, Y., Dooley, M., Ryan, J. & McMahon, S. (2018). Diagnostic process for chronic inflammatory response syndrome (CIRS): A consensus statement report of the consensus committee of surviving mold. *Internal medicine review*, (6)5 May 2018. [Full text](#).