**////Title: Improving Indoor Air Quality Lessens the Symptoms Associated with Chemical Intolerance**

**////Bodytext:**

Chemical intolerance is on the rise, currently afflicting around 20% of the American population. Common triggers include low-level exposure to indoor air contaminants such as combustion products from gas stoves and smoking, and indoor volatile organic compounds from products including disinfectants and air fresheners, as well as chemicals from paint and construction materials.

For most of us, the usual day to day exposure to such substances doesn’t cause problems but for those afflicted with chemical intolerance, resultant symptoms can include headaches, mood changes, fatigue, ‘brain fog’ and gastrointestinal difficulties.

Researchers at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio, USA, have tested the effects of improving indoor air quality for individuals with symptoms of chemical intolerance.

The researchers developed and tested an intervention known as the Environmental House Call with three primary goals:

(1) to assist individuals in the identification, avoidance and/or reduction of potential home exposure to triggering substances for chemical intolerance

(2) to evaluate compliance with the programme through objective measurements of indoor volatile organic compounds

and

3) to evaluate symptom changes in chemical intolerance associated with changes in the measurements of indoor volatile organic compounds.

Individuals completed a validated questionnaire measure to confirm their chemical intolerance before taking part in the study. A team led by a Certified Indoor Environmental Consultant then performed five home assessments over a 6- to 10-month period.

At visits, the team discussed indoor air exposures, their health effects, and provided guidance for reducing these exposures while also collecting samples for volatile organic compounds. Outcomes were compared with those from a similar number of households that did not receive an intervention.

The researchers found that homes in which the expert recommendations were followed showed the greatest improvements in indoor air quality. The improvements were based upon decreased levels of airborne volatile organic compounds associated with reduced use of cleaning chemicals, personal care products and fragrances, which led to a reduction in the patient symptoms. In contrast, homes without such improvements were generally not associated with symptom improvement.

The researchers concluded that indoor air problems are often unreported by individuals and many of us typically view our homes as ‘safe havens’. People are often unaware of potentially harmful exposures to toxins even on a low level and rarely mention any such concerns during medical visits. As such, the consideration of indoor air problems simply is not part of the established medical approach to patient care.

These key findings confirm that not only is chemical intolerance a prevalent problem, but it is one that can be effectively addressed with appropriate support and advice for susceptible patients.

This video is a summary of ‘Does improving indoor air quality lessen symptoms associated with chemical intolerance?’ published in the journal Primary Health Care Research & Development. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1463423621000864>

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