



Top 12 Actions to Take After an EI Diagnosis

*Jumpstart your recovery from Environmental Illness
using diet, lifestyle practices, and the invaluable support
of your Planet Thrive friends.*

**Below is our top twelve list of actions you should take
as soon as you realize you have EI.**

- 1. Identify and stop current environmental exposures.**
- 2. Secure your finances.**
- 3. Practice avoidance – detoxify your life.**
- 4. Create a safe oasis in your home.**
- 5. Heal your brain.**
- 6. Move your body.**
- 7. Get a comprehensive analysis of your digestive health.**
- 8. Use diet and/or nutritional supplements.**
- 9. Address emotional trauma and heal your nervous system.**
- 10. Deepen your spirituality.**
- 11. Spend your time doing things you love.**
- 12. Surround yourself with love and support.**

Remember: People heal from environmental illness every day, and you can, too. Recovery from EI is usually not an overnight process, however, and can take months or years. Have patience, keep the faith, and open your heart and mind to all the transformative lessons a journey with chronic illness can bring.



1. Identify and stop current environmental exposures. Do you suspect your home, school or workplace is making you sick? **A simple way to test an environment:** take a weekend or longer to vacate the environment in question – go camping in an arid, mold-free climate. Keep a symptom diary to track how you feel. If you normally feel better on weekends, it might clue you in to the fact that your school or workplace is making you sick. If you feel better camping than in your own home, more than likely there is a hidden culprit in your living space making you feel ill.

Once you have a general idea that your environment is contributing to troubling health symptoms, you can work with an [environmental medicine physician](#) and a qualified [environmental home consultant](#) to determine specific ongoing sources of chemical exposure, electromagnetic radiation, and toxic mold in your home, school and/or workplace.

Note: Most allopathic, western medicine physicians will not be able to help you, as they are not trained in environmental health, nutrition, or wellness and many times will refer EI patients to psychiatrists for pharmaceutical intervention. Choose your healthcare team wisely, and interview potential doctors before investing your time, energy and money and potentially exposing yourself to the air fresheners, synthetic cleaning agents, and perfumed patients and staff found in most doctor offices.

You'll also want to check your body for heavy metals and bacterial, viral, parasite, and fungal infections. If your lifestyle or home or work environment is found to be harming you, **take immediate actions to eliminate or greatly reduce the exposure.** If lifestyle adjustments cannot protect you from further toxic exposures, make arrangements to leave your home and/or workplace immediately, either temporarily or permanently. With environmental illness, there usually is a "spreading" phenomenon where you can sensitize to many other chemicals or substances fairly quickly if you do not practice avoidance and stop the source(s) of toxic exposure.

Do not be afraid to take such drastic actions on your own behalf, or it could

result in much more severe damage to your brain and body. This is especially true in the case of toxic mold such as *Stachybotrys*, which can have devastating long-term effects on a person's health and life. Some people have found significant improvement of health symptoms merely by moving out of a mold-infested home and leaving behind all of their belongings, especially their clothing.

Tips from others with environmental illness:

"The number one thing that would have kept me from crashing was immediately removing myself from my apartment and work place and leaving behind my belongings when I realized what a problem it was."

"I wish someone had told me: Take a semester or year off from grad school, move out of your poisonous rental, and put your stuff in storage. I could have avoided the big crash."

"MOLD is the big thing I wish others warned about. I did my research, was involved in the MCS online community, and yet had no clue the water in our basement could be making me sick!"

2. Secure your finances. For those that become ill in the workplace but would like to continue working, make a real effort to negotiate a telecommuting option with your employer for continuing your job, if possible. If continuing to work from home is not possible, apply for [SSDI](#), SSI, Food Stamps, Worker's Compensation and other applicable disability/low-income benefits available in your state **as soon as it becomes clear that you are no longer able to work.**

Many people delay the process because they have trouble accepting the term "disabled." Do not let a sense of pride or state of denial prevent you from securing long-term financial security. Many of these disability benefits can take a while to be approved and may even have timeframes for applying, so you'll want to start the process as soon as possible. Be prudent in selecting tests to prove your disability. Some tests can cause serious setbacks in health, as can travel to specialists. Weigh the potential risks with the potential benefits carefully.



It typically takes up to two years (in some cases, longer) to receive SSDI benefits, so you'll need to support yourself during that time. Since there is no guarantee you'll be approved for benefits, if you are functional enough, you might want to consider creating an online business that brings in cash flow with minimal ongoing work on your part to supplement your disability benefits, provide income while you wait for benefits to be approved, or support you should your SSDI application be denied. Be aware that SSDI has limits on how much income you can earn and how many hours you can work per week while waiting for an SSDI application to be reviewed. **Business ideas:** eBook, service, product, blog.

3. Practice avoidance – detoxify your life.



If you have EI, you should **immediately do a complete makeover** of all the products you use on and in your body, and in your home. Use [chemical free products](#) for [personal care](#), [cleaning](#), [bedding](#), and [clothing](#). [Reduce electromagnetic radiation](#) exposure as much as possible. Eat a [nutrient-dense organic diet](#) from natural, wild, and grass-fed sources. Under the guidance of your physician, go off any prescription drugs if it is possible to use natural approaches to manage your symptoms (people with environmental illness typically have compromised detoxification pathways and drugs can be very hard on the liver). While you are healing, avoid spending time with people wearing products that are harming you, and do not let them into your safe space. Wear protective gear (face mask, respirator, Tyvek jumpsuit, etc.) if/when you have to. Stay upwind of potential triggers. You'll want to detoxify your emotional body as well; just as chemicals and mold can be toxic to our system, so can emotions, thoughts, and relationships. Work on releasing attachments to people and relationships that do not serve your greater good. Pay attention to the thoughts you allow to enter your mind. Bringing awareness to this area can be very healing in itself.

4. Create a safe oasis in your home

to insure you can get [restorative sleep](#) each night: no EMFs, no chemicals. Your [safe oasis](#) should ideally only include your [bed/bedding](#), a [heat source](#), and a [wind-up](#) or battery operated alarm



clock if needed. Depending on your situation, you may need to use non-toxic materials such as Denny Foil and Shurtape to seal out off-gassing construction materials in your safe space, or install a [safe shed or small studio](#) outside your home. If you have a mold situation, you may want to [camp outside](#) at a nearby state park to get away from the mold infested site while you figure out a long-term housing solution. As you may already know, it's very hard to make sound decisions when you are brain fogged, sleep deprived, or otherwise cognitively impaired – having a safe space to sleep is vital to your recovery.

5. Heal your brain. Environmental illness is a neurotoxic injury. That means that your brain has been damaged by chemicals, mold, lyme neurotoxins and/or other environmental factors. Some of this damage occurs in the amygdala – the “fight or flight” center of the brain – affecting our ability to handle everyday stress and locking our limbic system into a hyperdrive mode so that all body systems are stuck micro-managing a continual state of “emergency.” No wonder many of us are so close to adrenal failure!

A well-rounded recovery plan will include stopping the source of toxic exposure and living a healthy lifestyle, as well as healing the affected part of the brain and/or rewiring around the damage site. Eating plenty of healthy fats and other



[brain boosting nutrients](#) is essential. Some sufferers of EI are also finding significant symptom improvement, and sometimes nearly full recovery, by using brain retraining programs such as Annie Hopper's [Dynamic Neural Retraining System™](#) and/or Ashok Gupta's [Amygdala Retraining™ Program](#). These therapies can help calm the limbic system and it is hypothesized that they can reroute our innate stress response and/or create healthy new neuronal pathways in the brain to bypass damaged areas and reset limbic system function.

It will be much easier to do these programs if you are in a stable living situation that is not actively making you sick, so ideally #1, 3 and 4 above will be in place before you start these programs. However, don't let #1, 3 and 4 be an obstacle to starting the programs. Others are seeing symptom improvement with biofeedback, the [Buteyko Breathing Method](#), [EFT](#), [Donna Eden's energy medicine](#), meditation, and related modalities. See [limbicrotraining.com](#) for more information.

6. Move your body. [Regular paced exercise](#) can be very beneficial to health (unless you suffer from [post-exertional malaise](#), a common symptom of chronic fatigue syndrome). Try to do some stretching, [yoga](#), walking, light weightlifting, [qigong](#), [rebounding](#), dancing to your favorite music, or other low stress exercise every day, especially if you are mostly sedentary and spend hours sitting at the computer. Exercise can help normalize digestion, keep the lymph flowing, boost your mental outlook, and strengthen your muscles, among other benefits. Dr. Joseph Burrascano, a renowned lyme disease specialist, has even gone as far to say “Despite antibiotic treatments, patients will NOT return to normal unless they exercise!...More importantly, [a properly executed exercise program](#) becomes part of the treatment, as it can actually go beyond the antibiotics in helping to clear the symptoms and to maintain a remission.” He cautions against starting any aerobic activity until stamina is built up slowly with other types of exercise. If you have lyme disease (a common infection in those with environmental illness – [get tested](#) to find out), you’ll want to read his [full exercise recommendations](#).



7. Get a comprehensive analysis of your digestive health – check gut flora; identify and treat hidden food allergies. Intestinal dysbiosis (imbalance), systemic candida infections, pathogenic bacteria, and parasites are commonly found in people with environmental illness. Many people with EI also develop extensive [food intolerances](#). Sometimes, these can be hard to diagnose, as the symptoms may not seem related to digestion. Celiac disease can result in purely



neurological symptoms, with no digestive symptoms at all. For this reason, it is important to get a [comprehensive analysis of your intestinal health](#), go on a [food rotation](#) or elimination diet, and/or get tested for food allergies/intolerances as soon as you are diagnosed, whether you have digestive symptoms or known food allergies, or not.

Consider going on a refined sugar-free, gluten/wheat-free, dairy-free, soy-free, grain-free diet. The [GAPS diet](#) and [Specific Carbohydrate Diet \(SCD\)](#) are popular among those with environmental illness. You may be amazed at how many of your symptoms clear up from dietary changes alone. These days, there are so many [great food blogs](#) out there for people with food intolerances and allergies, that you don't have to feel deprived at all. You can also look into [EFT](#), [Donna Eden's allergy technique](#), [NAET](#), [provocation/neutralization](#) and other approaches to managing food allergies.

8. Use diet and/or nutritional supplements to correct vitamin and mineral deficiencies, and detoxification methods to reduce your total toxic load.

Magnesium, buffered vitamin C, and vitamin B-12 are supplements often used by those with EI, as are those that [Dr. Pall](#) recommends that [downregulate the NO/ONOO++ cycle](#). You'll want your physician to do a complete nutritional profile on you before starting any supplement program.



[Heat depuration therapy](#) (sauna) is commonly used with environmentally ill patients, however, you should approach [detoxification](#) methods with extreme care; many with EI have impaired detox pathways and can get very ill if they try to detox too quickly or aggressively. If doing sauna, be sure to use the proper protocol, which includes replacing electrolytes and lost minerals as you sweat. (See: [Dr. Grace Ziem's protocol](#), [Dr. Sherry Roger's protocol](#)) Be especially cautious when dieting, as a sudden weight loss can release chemicals stored in fat cells into the bloodstream too quickly for the EI body to handle. **Get familiar with toxin binders** – activated charcoal, psyllium, chlorella, cholestyramine (CSM), bentonite clay, etc. – before proceeding with any detoxification program.

[Heavy metal chelation](#) is another area to be very cautious in, as many with EI have trouble excreting mercury, lead, arsenic and other heavy metals. Do your research well and proceed slowly and with great care. Sometimes doing nothing is better than doing something.



9. Address emotional trauma and heal your nervous system

using [EFT](#), [EMDR](#), [somatic experiencing](#), and other techniques. There are many paths to recovery, but according to [Ashok Gupta](#), all of them involve calming the nervous system. Practice forgiveness if you are holding onto past grievances with people in your life. When [healing trauma](#) (both past trauma and the trauma that can come with becoming disabled by EI), it's important to have a team to help support you while you process the more difficult emotions. Those with EI often have a history of trauma in their lives that has primed their brain and nervous system, and many times emotional healing can provide a significant boost to physical healing. Your support system could include a psychotherapist, coaching group, online support group, close friend, and other resources.

10. Deepen your spirituality.

The deep challenges of environmental illness can provide the background for enormous spiritual and personal growth. Whether your faith is tied to an organized religion or rooted in nature and the Universe, the isolation and feelings of total abandonment many of us experience as part and parcel of becoming disabled by EI can offer the time, space, and emotional platform to connect more deeply with a higher power and provide you with an emotional anchor when the rest of the world seems to have fallen away.



11. Spend your time doing things you love.

Set aside regular time in your day or week to focus on something that gives you pure joy – whether listening to music, playing with your friend's lovable dog, [making art](#), visiting your nephews, cooking with your favorite ingredients, learning a new language, watching the latest blockbuster film...the list is endless. It's important to nurture interests in your life that are separate – and can provide a welcome distraction – from your body/symptoms. Immersing yourself in your passions also raises neurotransmitter levels and imparts innumerable benefits to body and mind.

12. Surround yourself with love and support from

family, friends, pets, and others with your condition, and reduce stress levels as much as possible. Support can come in many forms; in person, by phone, via the computer. Be realistic about what the people currently in your life will and won't do to accommodate you and find healthy ways to maintain relationships where you can talk about things other than being sick; meet friends for walks outside, meet in places with high ceilings and good ventilation – like Whole Foods – for meals.

Reach out if your support system needs to grow: volunteer, join support groups, adopt a pet. [Communicate clearly](#) with the people in your life so they understand the illness – share [these documents](#) and [brochures](#) with them and/or have your physician talk to them directly. The clearer and more matter-of-fact (unemotional) you can be when communicating your needs, the better. Rather than complain about the products they are using, buy them safer products that you tolerate and offer them as a gift, with a smile and confident request that they try out the products so you can still spend time together.

Keep in mind that for most who develop environmental illness, family and friends do not understand the illness and usually are unable to make the changes required to remain in the person's life without harming them. This is not personal or a reflection of how much they love/care about you. It doesn't make them a bad person; it is more a reflection of our culture, as well as basic human nature. The sooner you can accept this harsh reality and look elsewhere for the support you need, the easier it will be on you.



The [Planet Thrive online community](#) is one very supportive resource you can lean on; there are many others on the Internet and on Facebook. Do a search for “environmental illness community” or “chemical sensitivity community.” It is very important to create a small network of support – to find people you can connect with who can help you troubleshoot problems, do online research for you if you cannot access the computer, and otherwise offer practical and emotional support if you don't have family or friends to help out.

An important intention to have during recovery is to embrace hope. Read [success stories](#) of people thriving with and healing from environmental illness. See [MCS recovery](#), [Healing from MCS](#) and [Debra Lynn Dadd](#) for starters. Learn



about the lives of those who have accomplished much and had many rich experiences in spite of great suffering, and let their lives be an inspiration to you – [Frida Kahlo](#), [Nick Vujicic](#), [Helen Keller](#), are just a few examples. Cultivate a “can do” attitude and view day-to-day challenges as opportunities for growth, creativity and flexibility. Remain focused on *practical solutions* when faced with

seemingly insurmountable problems and not on your emotional reaction to them. Stay away from MCS support groups that tell you it is impossible to heal or be cured, or that negatively focus on toxicity and symptoms.

Recommended books: [MCS - A Survival Guide](#), [The E.I. Syndrome: An Rx for Environmental Illness](#), [Detoxify or Die](#), [Our Toxic World: A Wake Up Call](#), [Is This Your Child's World?](#), [The Highly Sensitive Person](#), [Joyful Recovery From Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/ME](#), [The Brain That Changes Itself](#)

There are many other tips and recommendations for those recovering from environmental illness; this list is neither complete nor exhaustive. Many people swear by acupuncture, cranio-sacral therapy (and other chiropractic techniques), provocation-neutralization shots, hyperbaric oxygen, and other alternative therapies. Others have been physically hurt or financially drained, with no real benefit, by those same therapies. We intentionally left those off our list and stuck to the most practical and general suggestions we could come up with, as there are literally hundreds of modalities you can experiment with, and individuals will respond differently to these treatments.

We would like to end our guide with the caution to **avoid stewing in “victim” thinking**. Yes, you may have been poisoned by the ignorant or malicious actions of others, you may feel abandoned by loved ones and all the support systems you put your trust in your entire life, you may be [justifiably angry](#) about the value system



embraced by our culture. But the only thing you have control over today is your own actions and thoughts, and how you live the rest of your life. We encourage you to take control of your health and live an empowered lifestyle going forward – for today is truly the first day of the rest of your life! As renowned environmental illness specialist William J. Rea, M.D., has said, “*There is always hope for improvement from chemical injury and one should never give up hope.*” Following the recommendations of this guide will increase your chances of recovery and living a rich, vibrant life. You don’t have to go through it alone – connect with other empowered wise warriors recovering from environmental illness in the [Planet Thrive online community](#). **Blessings to you on your path!**



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