

Q & A

Low Dose Antigens

Q: My doctor wants me to start on Low Dose Antigens (LDA). Traditional allergy shots made my multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS) worse. Will LDA help me?

A: The real question is what you would be taking LDA for. Remember, LDA is an "allergy" treatment geared at changing immunity, not an MCS treatment. MCS is not an allergy and does not produce increased levels of IgE (immunoglobulin E) like an allergy does.

Allergies are an overreaction of the immune system to otherwise "benign" substances, such as pollen, dander, and dust. They are characterized by the formation of rapid-acting antibodies known as IgE (immunoglobulin E). Symptoms are typically itchy, watery eyes, sneezing, rash, and congestion. Serious allergic reactions may result in anaphylaxis (closing of the airway).

MCS is analogous to poisoning by low levels of "toxic" substances, such as solvents, petrochemicals, and volatile organic compounds (VOC's) found in fragrances, air fresheners, cleaning chemicals, and pesticides. Unlike allergies, MCS is not characterized by the formation of IgE, but rather by cellular inflammation and toxic hepatitis (impaired detoxification) which may lead to an elevated body burden of toxic chemicals.

Symptoms of MCS are typically neurological and include headache, fatigue, dizziness, nausea, disorientation, memory problems, slowed reaction time, peripheral neuropathy, sensory neuropathy, organic brain syndrome, and personality/mood changes. Other symptoms may include respiratory difficulty, rash, burning sensations in the nose and mouth, and gastrointestinal disorders. Serious MCS reactions may result in impaired speech, seizures, stroke, and paralysis.

Many people have allergies alone or MCS alone. A percentage of individuals suffer from both allergies

and MCS. When allergies and MCS co-occur, it can often be difficult to separate the two as each may exacerbate (worsen) the other. Therefore, those suffering from documented allergies in addition to MCS may find that reducing allergic reactions through LDA is helpful to overall improvement.

It is important to note that LDA treatments have not shown any effectiveness in MCS alone, but rather they work to reduce "allergic" reactions (IgE). A simple allergy test for IgE can help to differentiate whether symptoms are produced by allergy (IgE response).

LDA's actually give you a small dose of that which you react to.

If you have tested positive for true allergies, LDA will likely be helpful for your allergies (not the MCS).

If you have MCS (toxicity) only, adding a small dose of that which your body is already toxic with stands to only increase your toxicity and is likely to make your symptoms worse.

If you have both, LDA may be helpful for your allergies (not your MCS) IF you don't have toxicity with the same substance to which you are also allergic and being treated (as taking low doses of the antigen would act to increase your toxicity).

Reducing your allergies may improve your overall health and have a positive impact on your MCS, though it would not cure your MCS.

If you decide to try LDA, ask for the preservative/additive free LDA shots. Research has shown the preservative-containing versions are rarely effective in individuals with MCS because of the toxic reaction the chemical preservative causes.

Disclaimer: This should not be considered medical advice. Please consult with a qualified physician trained in environmental medicine.