

Screening Environmental and Work History

You may have to conduct an environmental or work history (occupation, military, exposure to chemicals) to identify a delayed reaction.

When to Survey

- When a client has a history of asthma, allergies, or autoimmune disease with puzzling, nonspecific symptoms including myalgias, arthralgias, headaches, back pain, sleep disturbance, loss of appetite, loss of sexual interest, and/or recurrent upper respiratory symptoms
- When presenting symptoms include an unusual combination of multiorgan signs and symptoms
- When client is diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, or other more nonspecific disorder

Quick Survey

- What kind of work do you do?
- Do you think your health problems are related to your work?
- Do you wear a mask or other protective gear or clothing at work?
- Are your symptoms better or worse when you're at home or at work?
 - Follow-up if worse at work: Do others at work have similar problems?
 - Follow-up if worse at home: Have you done any remodeling at home in the last 6 months?
- Have you been exposed to dusts, asbestos, fumes, chemicals, radiation, or loud noise?
- Have you ever served in any branch of the military?
 - *If yes*, were you ever exposed to dusts, fumes, chemicals, radiation, or other substances?

Follow-up

It may be necessary to ask additional questions based on past history, symptoms, and risk factors present.

- Do you live near a hazardous waste site or any industrial facilities that give off chemical odors or fumes?
- Do you live in a home built more than 40 years ago? Have you done renovations or remodeling?
- Do you use pesticides in your home, on your garden, or on your pets?
- What is your source of drinking water?
- Chronology of jobs (type of industry, type of job, years worked)
- How new is the building in which you are working?
- Exposure survey (protective equipment used, exposure to dust, radiation, chemicals, biologic hazards, physical hazards)
- Have you ever been exposed to chemical agents or irritants, such as asbestos, asphalt, aniline dyes, benzene, herbicides, fertilizers, wood dust, or others?