

Is your building sick???



“Sick building syndrome”(SBS) or “tight building syndrome” is used to describe situations in which building occupants experience acute health and comfort effects that appear to be linked to time spent in a building, but no specific illness or cause can be identified.

The main conditions for experiencing Sick Building Syndrome are spending long periods of time in well-sealed, poorly ventilated buildings that contain indoor air toxins. 1984 World Health Organization (WHO) report suggested up to 30% of new and remodeled buildings worldwide may be subject of complaints related to poor indoor air quality.

Possible risk factors for SBS:

- poor ventilation and low humidity
- High temperature or changes in temperature throughout the day
- Airborne particles, such as dust, carpet fibres or fungal spores
- Airborne chemical pollutants, such as those from cleaning materials or furniture, or ozone produced by photocopiers and printers
- Physical factors, such as electrostatic charges
- Poor standards of cleanliness in the working environment
- Inadequate ventilation when using chemical cleaning products
- Poor lighting that causes glare or flicker on visual display units
- Improper use of display screen equipment
- Psychological factors, such as stress or low staff morale

Anyone can be affected by SBS, but office workers in modern buildings without opening windows and with mechanical ventilation or air conditioning systems are most at risk.

Prevention of SBS

- Using toxin-absorbing plants, such as sansevieria., Peace lilies, Golden Pothos and , Dracaenas inside the buildings
- Replacement of water-stained ceiling tiles and carpeting.
- Use of paints, adhesives, solvents, and pesticides in well-ventilated areas and use of these pollutant sources during periods of non-occupancy.
- Increasing the number of air exchanges
- Lighting in the workplace should be designed to give individuals control, and be natural when possible
- Increase the ventilation rates and air distribution. The heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems should be designed to meet ventilation standards
- Banning of smoking in the workplace or restricting smoking to designated well-ventilated areas away from the work stations and creating no-smoking zones

Programme Officer
Priyankari Alexander