

# Too tired to live your best life?

Unrelenting fatigue was ruining Andrea Forman's days. Muttering at the sun filling her room, she dragged herself out of bed and shut the blinds to banish any hint of light. *Noon already?* she thought as she glanced at her clock, feeling upset that yet another morning had gone to waste. Here, how Andrea discovered her energy thief.

Last year I was at the height of my career. My rock group, Shanti Shanti—which is composed of my mom, dad, sister, brother and myself—was selling out concerts across the country and even appeared on *The Tonight Show With Jay Leno*.

My dream was coming true, but I found myself too tired to enjoy it. I'd always thrived on bright lights, loud music and on-stage excitement. But for some reason, the stage lights suddenly became unbearably bright, and I found myself feeling dizzy and nauseous during shows. Plus, I was so exhausted that all I wanted to do was sleep between gigs. To make matters worse, I didn't even have the comfort of my own bed to rest in—my family had been staying in a rental house in Denver for several months because it was centrally located to our concert venues.

**"I barely had the energy to get dressed."**

As crummy as I felt, I managed to write it off as the flu because the whole family seemed to be feeling a bit drained. But the symptoms kept intensifying until I found myself unable to function. Even getting dressed was a chore—clothing tags became a source of constant itching

and burning. And the sun became the enemy. When a beam of light hit my eyes, it may as well have been an arrow piercing my retinas. I began wearing sunglasses and closing the blinds, even on cloudy days.

I couldn't muster the energy to perform, so the family was forced to cancel concerts. With my "flu" showing no signs of yielding, I started seeing doctor after doctor. I heard diagnoses ranging from vitamin deficiencies to illness due to the high altitude in Denver. Even my job as an entertainer was blamed, as terms like "high-strung" and "too delicate" (read: "It's all in your head!") were bandied about. Most appointments ended with the doctor simply doling out antibiotics and sending me on my way.

My father wasn't sold on these expert opinions, however. Following a hunch, he began searching the rental house for clues. His discovery: Not only had the furnace not been serviced in nine years but the exhaust was being rerouted back into the house. An EPA inspection revealed carbon monoxide (CO)



**"Doctors doled out antibiotics and sent me on my way!"**

—Andrea Forman, 27, Reno, NV



health

# Exposed!

## The TOXIC OVERLOAD that mimics THE FLU

readings that were *twice* as high as safe levels. The whole family was being poisoned by CO!

Within days we moved out of that lethal house. In the months that followed my family felt better, though no one was operating at 100 percent. And my health wasn't improving at all. My fatigue was so extreme that in order to avoid feeling totally unproductive, I set a goal of accomplishing one thing each day, no matter how minor. If I managed to even return a phone call, I considered it a good day.

### "Now I have the energy to live out my dreams!"

My symptoms persisted and more dead-end diagnoses followed, so my mother decided to do some CO research online. Incredibly, she came across a disorder called MUSES (multi-sensory sensitivity) Syndrome—a condition in which exposure to CO triggers lasting fatigue, flulike symptoms and hypersensitivity to light, sound, touch and smell. The pieces of the puzzle finally began to fall into place.

I contacted a specialist in the field of chemical and sensory sensitivity and learned that chronic exposure to low-level CO can be remedied with oxygen therapy—the breathing of oxygen from a tank or compressor daily for several weeks. The doctor explained that this increases the body's oxygen absorption rate, forcing CO out and restoring normal oxygen levels to reduce symptoms and restore energy.

For months I had done little more than lie in bed. But within days of starting oxygen therapy, all my symptoms began to disappear. Now I'm full of energy and tolerant of light, touch, smells and sound. My family and I have just released our new album, *East Meets South*, and we will be performing concerts around the world. Thank goodness for oxygen therapy—it has allowed me to live my dream life!

Up to 8 million Americans suffer from the effects of low-level carbon monoxide poisoning.

—Richard Allen, Ph.D.

### Amp up energy with this breathing technique

Taking small breaths in and out through the nose for 10 minutes has been shown to increase oxygen uptake by 10 to 20 percent. This strategy optimizes the balance of oxygen and carbon dioxide, ensuring that the brain and other organs can properly utilize oxygen. The result: improved stamina and focus.

Main photo: Kevin Dodge/Masterfile. Photo, Andrea: Keith Owens. Hair, makeup and stylist: Gaynel Linn. Text: Hallie Potocki.

! Up to 8 million Americans suffer from MUSES (multi-sensory sensitivity) Syndrome. Symptoms include headaches, fatigue, dizziness and hypersensitivity to light, sound, smell, taste and touch, and they can manifest months or even decades after exposure to carbon monoxide (CO).

! "MUSES Syndrome is misdiagnosed up to 90 percent of the time because symptoms are similar to many other vague ailments," says Alan R. Vinitzky, M.D., coauthor of *Energy—the Essence of Environmental Health* (AuthorHouse, 2004). "Plus, CO can accumulate in the most unexpected places, including around candles, wood or gas stoves, space heaters and dryers."

☺ The following simple strategies can help prevent the excessive CO exposure that triggers MUSES Syndrome.

#### ✓ Avoid using more than one exhaust fan simultaneously

Running multiple exhaust fans (kitchen, bath, attic, dryer) at once can cause the airflow to "backdraft" into the house. This allows harmful gases to build, says Matthew Ellis, M.D., director of the Hyperbaric Center at the North Florida Regional Medical Center in Gainesville.

#### ✓ Have a damper guard installed

Furnaces feature a damper that closes the vent to limit the loss of warm air and the seeping of CO when the boiler turns off. To ensure it does its job, have a technician install a guard that stops the furnace from operating when the damper is closed.

#### ✓ Place CO alarms strategically

CO detectors should be installed within 15 feet of bedrooms and any other room that gets a great deal of use. Don't place them near windows and doorways (increased airflow can affect readings) or within 15 feet of gas or wood cooking and heating appliances (which can emit trace amounts of CO). Replace batteries every fall and spring when resetting your clocks. A top-rated alarm: Kidde 900-0146 Battery-Operated Carbon Monoxide Alarm with Digital Display (\$35, at The Home Depot stores).

**We're here to help!**  
For more information on MUSES Syndrome or oxygen therapy, visit [MCSRR.org](http://MCSRR.org).