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Aeroantigens in office building workers

- [Previous article](#) in Issue
- [Next article](#) in Issue
- [Drug links](#) from Mosby's DrugConsult
- [Genetic information](#) from OMIM

To the Editor:

The study by Menzies et al (J Allergy Clin Immunol 1998;101:38-44) is seriously flawed in its failure to include non-IgE immune mechanisms as a possible cause of symptoms related to aeroantigens. By choosing to ignore immunopathology caused by immune complexes or cellular mechanisms, the study is incomplete and thereby misleading. The models for immune complex-induced illness are either the local Arthus reaction or serum sickness. The best single marker of such hypersensitivities is specific serum IgG, which is best measured by ELISA techniques.

The spores of *Aspergillus/Penicillium* and *Alternaria* species are quite different (3 μ m vs 30 μ m), which determines how far they penetrate the breathing apparatus. Most *Alternaria* spores end up in the nose and posterior pharynx, whereas *Aspergillus/Penicillium* spores can penetrate to the alveoli. This causes differences in symptoms.

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