

HOW TO HOST AURORA LEVINS MORALES

AN ACCESS GUIDE

Thank you! If you're reading this document, it's because you've invited me to stay in your home or another facility, so we can do something interesting, and are about to spend a few minutes learning how to help me stay healthy during our time together. I live with a long list of physical challenges, some of which are just uncomfortable and some of which can be life threatening. I have many years of experience handling them, and am the best possible expert you could have, to help you set things up well for me. The most important thing to understand is that because of a genetic liver condition, a challenged immune system, and several neurological conditions, including epilepsy, my body can react very strongly to physical or chemical conditions that would be fine for someone else. In order to be safe, healthy and able to participate in what we're planning, I need to avoid the highest risk problems and give my body maximum support so I can handle the rest.

My body reacts in extreme ways to many common chemicals, combustion fumes, mold, dust, and smoke. In order for me to stay with you and stay well, I need to make sure, in advance, that the bed you're offering me will support my health. Here are the biggest risk factors:

MOLD, MILDEW OR MUSTINESS

In any damp climate, especially in older homes, or homes with carpeting that has gotten wet, it's easy for mold spores to settle and start raising families. You may be living with mold and have gotten used to it, so that you don't smell it. I am extremely allergic to many kinds of mold, and need to avoid even slightly musty spaces. The best bet is to house me in a well aired upper story room with wooden floors, and to have someone with a good nose, who doesn't live there, come by and sniff the air. Sometimes an enclosed porch is the best place for me.

LAUNDRY PRODUCTS

Laundry detergents and fabric softeners can have as many as 500 different chemicals in them. One popular brand was found to contain 28 identified carcinogens and 19 neurotoxins. Because my brain has already been injured, and because my liver can't get rid of toxins very efficiently, sleeping on

bedding that has been washed with conventional detergents, fabric softeners or dryer sheets can make me lose control of my limbs, be unable to speak clearly, make muscles in my arms and face start twitching, cause shooting pains in my legs, and even provoke full blown migraines or seizures. And once a person become sensitized to these products, natural essential oils can also cause reactions. For instance, I am one of many chemically impacted people who gets sick from lavender oil.

Unfortunately, it's not as simple as tossing the sheets in the washer with an unscented soap. The fragrances in laundry products are engineered to stick to fabric and last a long time. In fact, even putting totally unscented sheets on a bed might not be enough, because the scent chemicals could stick to the mattress. Here's what has worked best:

- First choice is to stay in a household that has been using unscented products for a long time.
- Second choice is that I travel with my own sheets and pillow and we put me on the bed with the least chemical exposure. That is often a daybed, sofa or fold out futon or sofa bed that doesn't get sheets put on it very much. I also travel with a small air filter, which can help.
- Because I'm sixty-four and have back and joint pain, a mattress on the floor isn't the best option.
- Because I don't always sleep well, I need a room of my own, away from communal noise.

OTHER ISSUES

- No smoking of any kind in the house, or on the clothing of people who will be near me.
- No pesticide spraying, including bug sprays.
- No scented candles or incense (if it's used regularly in the space, it will linger) except for sage, sweetgrass and cedar.
- No gas appliances in the room I sleep in.
- Pets are fine.

Thank you for thinking about housing me.

Aurora Levins Morales

aurora@historica.us