

# What's in your perfume, fragrances and scented products?



## DO YOU WEAR PERFUME OR COLOGNE? DO YOU USE SCENTED PRODUCTS?

An increasing number of people are becoming allergic/sensitive to scented products, such as perfume, cologne, hair products, body lotions, hand sanitizers and fabric softeners, to name a few.

Scents/fragrances are comprised of many toxic chemicals. It is these chemicals that cause allergic reactions or sensitivities. These reactions are usually not a histamine reaction, as you would find with food or seasonal allergies. As a result, there are not medications available to prevent or treat the varied reactions to scented products.

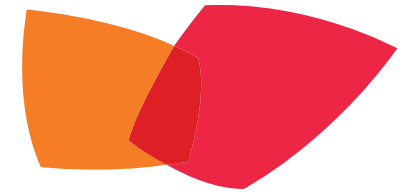


### DID YOU KNOW?

Exposure to scented products can trigger nausea, respiratory anaphylaxis, asthma, headaches, neurological symptoms, and tissue damage?

Some people require days to recover. While with others, the damage can be irreparable and the person's condition deteriorates with each exposure.

There was a time, when perfumes and colognes were the main culprits, but now many personal care products have strong, lingering fragrances that produce the same reactions.



## WHAT IS IN YOUR FRAGRANCE? \*

Perfumes (fragrances) are now added to most cleaning, laundry, and personal care products.

Until the 20<sup>th</sup> Century perfume ingredients were taken entirely from plants and animals. Over the years, perfumes have become more and more synthetic.

A fragrance is a mixture of many chemicals (sometimes hundreds) and consumers aren't told what they are buying. Under trade secret laws, companies can just put 'fragrance' on the label instead of listing the chemicals in the fragrance.

The National Academy of Science reports that 90% of the chemicals that are used to produce perfumes and fragrances today are derived from petroleum, including known toxins capable of causing cancer, birth defects, central nervous system disorders and allergic reactions. Over 5,000 different chemicals are used in the making of fragrances but only approximately 1,500 have been tested for safety.

Advertisers lead us to believe that we need fragrance products to be clean, beautiful and desirable but the reality is that we are rubbing petroleum derivatives into our skin and inhaling industrial solvents and other toxic chemicals.

## WHAT ARE THE HEALTH EFFECTS? \*

Here are some common ingredients found in perfumes and fragrances and their health effects:

**Benzaldehyde:** skin irritant, neurotoxic, causes respiratory depression and somnolence, mutagenic, linked to cancer.

**Benzyl alcohol:** toxic to the nervous system and skin; a hormone disruptor, linked to cancer.

**Butylphenol:** eye irritant, skin irritant, mutagenic, linked to cancer, suspected hormone disruptor.

**Cinnamal:** allergen, skin irritant, neurotoxic, hormone disruptor, linked to cancer.

**Eugenol:** skin irritant, neurotoxic, hormone disruptor, linked to cancer.

**Isoeugenol:** allergen, skin irritant, neurotoxic, hormone disruptor, reproductive toxin, mutagenic, linked to cancer.

**Limonene:** may cause allergic reactions, skin irritant

**Linalool:** eye and skin irritant, neurotoxic, mutagen.

**Phthalates:** are common in scented products, mostly as solvents to carry the fragrance and other ingredients. Phthalates are hormone disruptors. They include Dibutyl Phthalates (DBP) and Diethyl Phthalates (DEP). In 2003, the European parliament banned the use of DEHP and DBP in cosmetics.

**Synthetic Musks:** are another group of toxic fragrance ingredients. They are aromatic compounds commonly substituted for more expensive natural musks. They are added to perfumes, air fresheners, laundry detergents, hair creams, and soaps. Synthetic Musks are stored in body fat and have been found in human blood and breast milk. They are suspected hormone disruptors and have been linked to cancer, particularly breast cancer.

## IS THIS A SERIOUS ISSUE?

Yes, as with second hand smoke, fragrances affect those who come in contact or inhale fragrances worn by others. A large number of workplaces, hospitals, health clubs etc, request that people refrain from wearing scented products.

The Canadian Human Rights Commission introduced policies in 2007 to protect those with sensitivities to fragrances and other environmental toxins. As a result many businesses, organizations and services have scent free policies around wearing fragrances, and communicate the need to be considerate of others. **"We Share The Air"** is a common slogan used in the education and awareness of this issue.



## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

As you can see, fragrance allergies can be very serious. Even a small amount or "dab" can make a person very ill. Some people require days to recover. While with others, the damage can be irreparable and the person's condition deteriorates with each exposure. Fragrances tend to linger on fabrics and remain on clothing for a period of time and can cause the same ill effects days later. Today, there are a wide variety of "fragrance-free" products readily available at most major retailers.

- Always read the ingredients before buying a personal care product. Look for the most natural and safest products.
- Don't buy anything that lists "fragrance", "perfume", or "parfum" as an ingredient.
- Look for products labeled "fragrance-free"

This brochure explains why this is an issue for some people and reminds us that, **we do share the air**, and need to be considerate of others.

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