

A Scent-Free Work Places — It's Just Good Sense!

Increasingly, workers are becoming sensitized to chemicals in the environment. For many workers being exposed to perfumes and other scented products could pose a serious health risk. In addition, scented products can aggravate existing health problems for workers who suffer from asthma, allergies and other health conditions.

What are scents?

Before the 20th century, fragrances were extracted directly from plants and animals. Today 80 to 90 percent of fragrances are synthetic compounds derived from various petrochemicals. Fragrance chemicals are volatile by nature meaning they disperse into the air quickly and linger for a long time.

What types of products contain scents?

Scents are included in a very large range of products including:

- perfumes & colognes
- shampoo & conditioners
- hairspray & other styling products
- deodorants
- lotions & creams
- soaps
- aftershave
- cosmetics
- potpourri
- air fresheners
- oils
- candles
- laundry soap & softener
- industrial & household cleaners

What are the health effects of scented products?

Symptoms include shortness of breath/ wheezing, dizziness, headaches (including migraine), nausea, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, confusion, loss of appetite and cold-like symptoms.

Fragrances have long been recognized as skin allergens and irritants. Scented soaps and cleaners can cause skin problems such as dermatitis

Scented products are known to be respiratory irritants. These products can cause or worsen respiratory problems such as asthma, emphysema, bronchitis and allergies. In one survey of asthmatic patients, researchers found that perfume and/or colognes triggered an attack in 72% of the subjects. Some of the synthetic compounds used in fragrances are known to be toxic and in some cases cause cancer. Scents can also affect the brain. Some research indicates that scent materials can affect frame of mind in a manner similar to alcohol and tobacco.

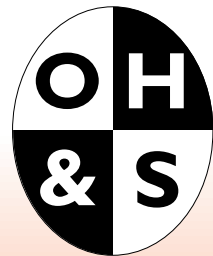
What can you do?

Avoid wearing scented products – recognize that these scents can have a serious effect on your co-worker and patients

Ask your employer to develop and implement a scent-free workplace policy

Notify your employer if you are an individual who's health is affected by scents in the workplace

Contact your union representative to assist you in ensuring that you are provided with a scent-free work environment.



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United Nurses of Alberta