

Have you considered Fragrance Free?

The National Academy of Sciences reports that 95% of the chemicals used in fragrances today are synthetic compounds derived from petroleum, including known toxins capable of causing cancer, birth defects, central nervous system disorders and allergic reactions. We have been brainwashed by the industry to feel we must cover up our natural scents with toxic chemicals. Many of the same chemicals in perfumes are the same chemicals that are in cigarette smoke.

You would think the government would protect people by attempting to regulate the industries that are causing harm; however, the cosmetic industry is self regulated and isn't required to give formulations, test results, safety data or consumer complaints to the FDA. **When you use perfume or cologne, remember you are using powerful chemicals regulated solely by the industry that sells them. Just because they don't affect you now doesn't mean they won't affect someone in line next to you** (giving them a migraine or sinus problems), or that you will always be immune to their effects. These chemicals go directly into the blood stream when applied to our skin, and are also absorbed into the skin from our clothing. We also inhale these chemical fumes that go straight to our brains where they can do major harm, and many of these chemical fumes have a "narcotic" effect. These effects from scents can surface days after the exposure, and many people do not connect the strong perfume/cologne smell on the lady or gentleman next to them at the opera to their headache or upset stomach days later.

Did you know that many of the ingredients in your perfume are the exact same ingredients found in gasoline????! The scary thing is that the perfume industry is not regulated at all, and they can put any number of chemicals in fragrance without revealing what those chemicals are, and how they affect humans.

Being a chemical receptor, the nose can also be affected with sneezing and sinus problems. Studies have shown that inhaling fragrances can also cause **circulatory changes and electrical activity in the brain.** These changes can trigger **migraine headaches, the ability to concentrate, dizziness, and fatigue.** The number one cause of adverse skin reactions to cosmetics and laundry products is fragrance. The skin reactions to fragrance chemicals can produce **rashes, hives, dermatitis, or eczema. Other symptoms can include watery eyes, nausea, sore throat, cough, and chest tightness.** Some fragrance materials, studies have shown, are absorbed by the skin and then broken down into materials that are stronger sensitizers than the original chemicals.

Here are some **principal chemicals found in scented products and the health risks that can be involved:**

*Acetone — when inhaled, it can cause mild central nervous system disturbances such as dizziness, nausea, lack of coordination, slurred speech, and drowsiness. It can irritate the eyes, nose, throat, and skin.

*Alpha-pinene — can be a moderate irritant to skin, eyes, and mucus membranes.

*Alpha-terpineol — can cause excitement, loss of muscular coordination, hypothermia, central nervous system and respiratory depression, and headache.

*Benzyl acetate, benzyl alcohol, benzaldehyde, camphor, ethanol, and others. Most fragrance chemicals are not tested for safety.

Perfume is composed of many of the same toxic chemicals found on the EPA's and CERCLA's hazardous waste lists, and one or all of which in combination with one another, cause when inhaled: "ventral nervous system disorders, dizziness, nausea, lack of coordination, slurred speech, drowsiness, irritation to the mouth, throat, eyes, skin, lungs and GI tract, kidney damage, headache, respiratory failure, ataxia, and fatigue, among other symptoms and illnesses," Material Safety Data Sheets on each chemical confirm these findings. **Many of the chemicals in perfumes have been shown to cause serious health problems and death in animals.**

In 1989, the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health recognized 884 poisonous substances (many synthetically derived from petrochemicals) from a list of 2,983 chemicals used in the fragrance industry capable of causing cancer, birth defects, central nervous system disorders, allergic respiratory reactions, skin and eye irritations. According to the National Institute of Health, in view of the escalating incidence of cancer, as well as a 58% increase in asthma over the past decade, this information is crucial.

Did you know that benzaldehyde, a chemical known to cause kidney damage in humans is used in fragrances, and that benzyl acetate used in fragrances is linked to a cause of pancreatic cancer? That ethyl acetate is on the EPA Hazardous Waste list known as a carcinogenic, causing kidney and liver failure and it is used in fragrances?

Fragrance is a common indoor air pollutant, and **synthetic fragrance compounds accumulate in human tissue and are found in breast milk.** The Institute of Medicine placed fragrance in the same category as secondhand smoke in triggering asthma in adults and school age children. According to the latest information from the National Institute of Health, 26.3 million people in the U.S. have been diagnosed with asthma.

Studies show that fragrance chemicals can cause health effects, primarily the skin, lungs, and brain. Some data suggests that as many as **75% of known asthmatics (approximately 9 million people in the U.S.) have asthma attacks that are triggered by perfumes.** Fragrance chemicals have the potential to affect, and possibly damage, brain tissue. For example, linalool, the most abundant chemical in perfume and fragrance products is known to cause lethargy, depression, and life-threatening respiratory effects.

An **estimated 5.72 million people in the U.S. have a skin allergy to fragrance,** and fragrance is the number one cause of allergies to cosmetics and laundry products. Sinus problems and migraine headaches may be negatively impacted by exposure to scented products.

Several studies indicate that **15-30% of the general population reports some sensitivity to chemicals, including fragrances,** and 4-5% report that chemical intolerance has a major impact on their quality of life. Of these people, **more than 80% report that exposure to fragrances is bothersome.**

Many businesses, at the request of their employees, are voluntarily creating fragrance-free policies, says Tracie Saab, a consultant with the “Job Accommodation Network,” a Morgantown, West Virginia group that educates disabled workers and their employers. These policies are applauded by people with asthma, allergies, and the controversial disorder called multiple chemical sensitivity, in which even low levels of exposure to chemicals (from pesticides to perfumes) can trigger headaches, fatigue and other symptoms. “It is easier for businesses to enact these policies than to risk legal action somewhere down the line,” says Saab.

As a courtesy to the people around you, it is wise to carefully consider how your fragrance might impact others. Just because you can't smell a fragrance doesn't mean it can't cause symptoms in others. If someone asks you to refrain from wearing fragrances around them, understand that medical evidence is on their side and respect their request.

Excerpts from an article by June Russell, a retired health educator, writer and researcher. She has a most informative site. June has graciously allowed us to present this article. Please make sure to visit June's web site at: <http://www.jrussellshealth.org/>