

Fragrance Free Policy Handbook

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Our office policy

A fragrance-free environment helps create a safe and healthy workplace. Fragrances from personal care products, air fresheners, candles and cleaning products have been associated with adversely affecting a person’s health including headaches, upper respiratory symptoms, shortness of breath, and difficulty with concentration. People with allergies and asthma report that certain odors, even in small amounts, can cause asthma symptoms. We will work with building management to ensure that the products used to clean the workplace are fragrance-free and follow best practices to limit employee exposure to cleaning chemicals. We recognize the hazards caused by exposure to scented products and cleaning chemicals and we have a policy to provide a fragrance-free environment for all employees and visitors to keep a safe and healthy workplace environment. This policy applies to both employees and non-employee visitors of our space.

All offices and spaces used by the staff and their visitors are to remain free of scented products. Personal care products such as cologne, perfume, aftershave lotions, scented lotions, fragranced hair products and/or similar products are not

to be worn in the office. Use of air fresheners and candles are prohibited as is the use of cleaning products other than those purchased from the approved products list or otherwise vetted by management.

Employees will be informed of the Fragrance-free Policy through signs posted throughout the space. Visitors will be informed of the Fragrance-free Policy by their hosts, the meeting invite, email correspondences and signs posted throughout the space. Please include the following email Signature in your individual email accounts:

“This is a fragrance-free workplace. Thank you for not wearing any of the following during your visit: cologne, after shave lotion, perfume, perfumed hand lotion, fragranced hair products, and/or similar products. Our chemically-sensitive co-workers and clients thank you.”

What is fragrance sensitivity/Multiple Chemical Sensitivity?

Fragrance sensitivity/Multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS) is either an irritation or an allergic reaction to some chemical, or combination of chemicals, in a product. Although perfumes and colognes are generally what comes to mind when discussing fragrance sensitivity, fragrance is often added to a variety of daily use items including but not limited to toiletries, cosmetics, air fresheners, cleaning products, and pesticides. Materials used in fragrance are not required to be disclosed on labels, which can make it difficult to identify the ingredient or product that is responsible for the sensitivity. Regardless of what the specific allergen is or whether it has been identified, common reactions to exposure include headaches, respiratory problems, asthma, and skin irritations.

Individuals who already have allergies or asthma may be more sensitive to fragrances and may experience an exacerbation of symptoms when exposed to fragranced products. Some effects of exposure to fragranced products can be

immediate and transitory while others may be chronic and long lasting. For some individuals, exposure to any scent can cause a reaction while for others it may be that only a stronger scent triggers a reaction. Individuals with fragrance sensitivity can become increasingly sensitized over time to the point they cannot tolerate any exposure.

There are two types of allergy symptoms due to fragrance sensitivity - respiratory or skin allergy symptoms. Symptoms of fragrance sensitivity can include headaches, nausea, and a skin allergy like contact dermatitis, which causes redness, itching, and burning. Watery, itching, burning, and red eyes; sneezing; runny nose; and congestion are also common. In some cases, individuals experience breathing difficulties, such as wheezing, a tight feeling in the chest, or worsening of asthma symptoms. Frequency and level of sensitivity can differ from one individual to another and identifying the exact cause of the irritation or allergy can be difficult because of the complex chemical formulas in many everyday use products.

The potential for exposure can be high as fragrances are added to a multitude of everyday products and there has been an increase in the amount of time spent in indoor environments. Those with asthma, allergies, or other respiratory disorders may be more susceptible to the effects of fragranced products at levels that are much lower than what might cause problems for those in the general population. The best way to prevent fragrance sensitivity is to remove, block, or avoid the offending substance. Discussing the fragrance sensitivity with people at work and at home also can help to limit exposure to other people's fragrances. Because there is no requirement for manufacturers to list all the ingredients in their products, finding a product that is truly fragrance free can be challenging. Even some products that are labeled as being "unscented" or "fragrance free" contain herbal ingredients or oils from botanicals.

It is important to carefully read labels and some may want to consult with an allergist or dermatologist for recommendations and suggestions for selecting the right products. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Design for the

Environment (DfE) program helps identify cleaning and other products that have been determined to be effective and safer for human health and the environment. These products carry the Dfe label and a list of all partners and products recognized under the DfE Safer Product Labeling Program can be found at:

<http://www.epa.gov/dfe/index.htm>.

As awareness of the physical effects of fragrance sensitivities continues to grow, so do the number of manufacturers of products that are natural and free of fragrances.

Fragrance free products we use in the office

As this is a shared space, all organizations using the space are expected to take turns buying common use products, and are responsible for buying organizational specific products for their own use. Please coordinate shared product purchases via OPHI.

Common Use Products:

- [Seventh Generation Hand Wash Refills, Free & Clean Unscented](#)
- [Seventh Generation Dish Liquid Soap, Free & Clear Unscented](#)
- [Seventh Generation Dishwasher Gel, Free & Clear Unscented](#)

Individual Use Products:

- [ARTEZA Dry Erase Markers, Bulk Pack of 52 \(with Chisel Tip\), 12 Assorted Colors with Low-Odor Ink](#)
- [Impressa Whiteboard Cleaner Spray](#)
- [Avant Fragrance Free Hand Sanitizer](#)

Fragrance free products/pointers for yourself

We recognize that personal products and fragrances overlap with complicating factors like finances, culture, and personal preferences, and that it may take some trial and error to find an equitable compromise. The key in choosing products is to check the ingredient list carefully. If it says 'fragrance' or 'parfum' then it is not appropriate for our work space. Essential oils are fine for some chemically sensitive people, and not for others, so please try and choose entirely scent free products. It's especially important to avoid lavender, peppermint and rose, as those have the highest likelihood of negative impact.

Perfume, cologne and aftershave are the most common issues, but be sure you also consider the ingredients in things like hair products, deodorant, cosmetics, and lotion.

If you smoke, please be sure to do so at least 10 feet away from the door, and to wash your hands (and face, if possible) when you come back into the building.

Febreze, Lysol, bleach, and other such products are some of the most chemically laden and should not be used in the office, or on items/clothing that are brought into the office.

Additional Resources

- [The Chemical Sensitivity Foundation](#)
- [What is MCS?](#)
- [Fragrance Sensitivity Awareness](#)
- [How to Go Fragrance-Free/Non-Toxic](#)
- [Toxic chemicals found in common scented laundry products, air fresheners](#)

- [Get Mad When Folks Ask You to Be Scent-Free? Here Are 8 Things to Consider](#)
- [Fragrance free femme of colour genius](#)
- [Cosmetic Database](#) (advanced search option enables you to search for products without fragrance)