

You may choose to have this discussion with an individual or an entire group, whichever is appropriate to the situation.

- Request everyone's cooperation and understanding to voluntarily avoid the use of scented products in the area.
- Discuss the benefits of a scent-reduced work area.
- Implement measures to reasonably accommodate those who are affected by scented products.
- For meetings held in enclosed rooms, you may need to send out notices to attendees requesting them to be scent-aware.
- Consult campus accessibility resources to accommodate students during classes or exam time.
- Consult with the building engineer regarding the adequacy of ventilation in the area.
- Promote the information in this guideline and display the "We Share the Air" poster.
- Refer issues that cannot be resolved locally to the Department Head, Health and Safety Office, the local joint health and safety committee and Employee Relations.

- Discuss the issue openly. Ask questions about the health impact on the person, the types of symptoms experienced, the factors that make the person's symptoms better or worse, e.g. fragrance type, amount used.
- Empathize with the individual. Work with cooperation and understanding towards a satisfactory resolution.

Occupational Health & Safety Reference Guide

Towards a Scent-Aware Environment



What should you do if you're approached about the scented product you're wearing?

- If an individual or your supervisor informs you that the fragrance products that you use are a problem and requests that you reduce their use, or avoid them, you may feel puzzled, hurt, annoyed, defensive or even insulted by the request. Understand that this is not about you as a person or about your choice of fragrance but about the chemicals in the fragranced product.

Purpose

Douglas College is committed to a safe and healthy environment for faculty, staff, students and visitors.

This guideline is intended to:

- 1) Increase the awareness within the College community about the potential impact of fragrance chemicals on the health, well-being, productivity and lifestyle of those affected.
- 2) Ask for the voluntary cooperation of employees, students and visitors towards a scent-reduced environment.
- 3) Provide the steps for responding to scent-related issues.

What is the issue?

Exposure to perfumes and other scented products can trigger serious health reactions in individuals with asthma, allergies, migraines or chemical sensitivities.

Fragrances are found in a wide range of products. Common scented products include perfume, cologne, aftershave, hairspray, body spray, makeup and powders. Examples of other products with added scents include air fresheners, fabric softeners, laundry detergents, cleaners, carpet deodorizers, facial tissues, and candles.

It is a personal choice to use fragrances; however, fragrance chemicals are by their very nature shared. The chemicals vaporize into the air and are easily inhaled by those around us. Scented products are made up of a complex mixture of chemicals that can contribute to indoor air quality problems and cause health problems.

Some of these fragrance chemicals are known to be skin sensitizers. Some are also respiratory tract irritants, and can trigger asthma and breathing difficulties. Asthmatics commonly cite fragrances as initiating or exacerbating their asthma.

Fragrances are also implicated in vascular changes that can trigger migraines in susceptible individuals. Individuals with chemical sensitivities can experience symptoms at very low levels in the air, far below those known to cause harmful effects in the general population.

Susceptible individuals can experience a variety of symptoms, including headache, sore throat, runny nose, sinus congestion, wheezing, shortness of breath, dizziness, anxiety, anger, nausea, fatigue, mental confusion and an inability to concentrate. Although the mechanisms by which fragrance chemicals act to produce symptoms are not yet understood, the impact on those affected can be quite severe, resulting in great difficulty in work and study activities.

Working Towards a Scent-Reduced Environment

In order to protect those individuals with fragrance sensitivities and to possibly prevent others from developing such sensitivities, the College is asking for voluntary cooperation towards a scent-reduced environment. Faculty, staff, students and visitors are encouraged to avoid the use of strongly fragranced products, and to replace them with unscented alternatives. This is a request to voluntarily refrain from, or reduce the use of, chemical-based scented products, not a ban on scented products.

What is the College doing about it?

Recognizing that chemicals, including fragrance chemicals, can negatively impact on indoor air quality, the College will strive to:

- Encourage individuals to reduce unnecessary use of chemicals, including fragrances.
- Use environmentally-friendly and least harmful products in

laboratories, cleaning materials, and building materials.

- Target harmful chemicals and contaminants and implement controls to effectively prevent or minimize their release into the general air as result of building, maintenance, custodial, research and teaching activities.
- Support the best possible air quality practicably attainable, by means of proper ventilation, peak performance and proper maintenance of building mechanical ventilation systems.
- Develop proper information and training to promote the above to the College community.

What can you do to help?

- Be considerate of those who are sensitive to fragrance chemicals.
- Avoid the use of scented products; instead, use scent-free alternatives.
- If you do use scented products, use them sparingly. A general guideline for scented products is that the scent should not be detectable more than an arm's length away from you. Do not apply scented products in a public area.
- Avoid using products, e.g. air fresheners or potpourris that give off chemical-based scents in your work area.

What can you do if you are sensitive to fragrance chemicals?

- If you feel you can do so comfortably, approach the scented individual and let him/her know how you react to fragrances. Be specific about the types of physical reactions you have, e.g. asthma attacks, migraines, shortness of breath.

Talk to the individual in a cordial and respectful manner. Ask for his/her understanding and cooperation. Many people are unaware of the potential health effects of fragrance chemicals.

- Inform your supervisor or instructor of your sensitivities, your symptoms, and the types of exposures that improve or worsen symptoms.
- Ask them to assist in finding a solution to your situation. As an employee, you may ask your supervisor to discuss this matter with the individual involved or with the group of employees. As a student, you can ask your instructor to discuss the issue with the class and ask for their cooperation in not using, or reducing the use of, scented products.
- Consult with your physician about your symptoms.

What can you do as a Supervisor or Instructor?

If an individual in your work area or classroom is adversely affected by scented products:

- Listen to the person with respect and civility.
- Clarify the issue. Ask the individual to describe the health effects, the factors that make the problem better or worse, and the actions he/she is taking to deal with it.
- Investigate the issue and use good judgment and consideration to provide a fair, uniform and timely resolution.
- Discuss the issue with your staff or students in an open and non-threatening manner. Inform them of the health concerns that have arisen as a result of the use of scented products.