

District Health & Safety

SCENT AWARENESS INITIATIVE

Fragrance-Free Statement

Our goal is to be sensitive to employees and students with perfume and chemical sensitivities. In order to accommodate those who are medically sensitive to the chemicals in scented products, your district Health & Safety Committee asks that you consider refraining from wearing scented products, including colognes, after-shave lotions, perfumes, soaps, deodorants, body/face lotions, hair sprays or similar products. Our employees and students with medical chemical sensitivities thank you for your cooperation.

Awareness

Your district Health and Safety Committee wish is to raise awareness regarding the effects of scented products on some individuals as well as to provide information on what to do if you are affected by the use of these products. Through respectful communication we believe we can have a healthier workplace for all.

What impact could scented products have on the health of some individuals?

Many chemicals contained in scented products are known to be respiratory irritants. They can trigger asthmatic reactions and migraine headaches in some individuals, even at very low concentrations. Individuals sensitive to these chemicals may experience a wide range of symptoms such as rashes, severe headaches, nausea, dizziness and shortness of breath. When exposure is indoors, the impact is magnified.

What to do if someone in your school/work area is wearing a scented product that is causing you problems?

The best approach is to address the issue with the person in a cordial and respectful manner and let them know how scents affect your health. Share any supportive reference documents. Seek their cooperation and understanding. Suggest they consider using an unscented product. If the person requests additional documentation, refer them to the references listed below. You may wish to place a scented product poster in your office or on the door so that people are aware of your concern. If unsuccessful in dealing with the person, discuss the situation with your supervisor.

If you wish to talk directly to the person who has triggered symptoms consider addressing the following points:

- "I've noticed over the past several days that your _____ caused me to _____, which makes it difficult to _____. Would you please consider changing to an unscented product or reducing the amount of fragrance you are using?"
- "I like the smell of your new fragrance, but unfortunately, it triggers my _____, which makes it difficult to _____. Would you please consider reducing the amount of fragrance you are using?"

What will be done when I report the scented product problem in the workplace?

Your supervisor will ask you how the product(s) in question have affected you and what symptoms you are experiencing. Be specific about your symptoms. Explain when your symptoms appear. Your supervisor will document this information and may:

- suggest that you approach the person wearing the scented product in a cordial and respectful manner (as explained above);
- distribute this bulletin to employees/students and discuss the content as a general workplace issue; and/or
- discuss the concern privately with the individual involved explaining the adverse effects that are being experienced and suggesting that an unscented product be used as an alternative.

What happens if the scented product continues to be worn?

Speak to your supervisor again. He/she will endeavour to resolve the issue in a way that is respectful of the feelings and dignity of all concerned. Our Scent Awareness Initiative is a joint Health and Safety program and is supported by both unions and all administrative staff. If necessary, these groups will work together to resolve the issue.

What if I am approached about a scented product I am wearing?

Do not be embarrassed. Ask questions such as: is it the amount or the type causing the effects? Be willing to reach a resolution in a cooperative manner. Consider an alternative unscented product.

References:

1. Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety
http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/scent_free.html
2. Scent Safety in the Workplace, Work Safe BC,
http://www.worksafebc.com/contact_us/bid_opportunities/Assets/PDF/scentSafety.pdf
3. Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety
http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/scent_free.html
4. Canadian asthma consensus report, 1999. Canadian Medical Association Journal.
5. No Scents is Good Sense. OHS Canada. Jan/Feb 1998. Brenda Marsh.
6. Policy for Developing a Scent-Free the Workplace, The Lung Association,
<http://www.lung.ca/resources/DevelopingaScentfreePolicyforaWorkplace.pdf>
7. Healthy Environments, Women's Health Matters,
<http://www.womenshealthmatters.ca/centres/environmental/Healthy-Environments/Scent-Free.html>
8. Dealing with Fragrance Sensitivity in Workplaces, Canadian Employment Law,
<http://www.hrmguide.net/canada/law/fragrance-sensitivity.htm>