



Association pour la santé environnementale du Québec  
Environmental Health Association of Québec

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### Have a wonderful scent-free holiday season!

With the holidays coming up it is the time for celebration, and festivities with friends and family. In order to ensure that we all have the best holiday experience possible, we must make our houses and celebrations accessible for our family members who experience the disability of Multiple Chemical Sensitivity.

While it can be challenging to ensure that you are scent free, these actions will not only allow you to spend great family and friend time together, but will also protect your health and those around you. One common misconception that people have about fragrances is that “cleaner” smelling fragrances mean your house or body is clean. In reality, these types of fragrances are not necessary to have a clean house or body, and fragrances can have harmful side effects for you and the people you come in contact with. One synthetic perfume can contain up to 500 ingredients. Many of these chemicals are petroleum-based chemicals and a great number of them have not been tested for their toxicity to humans and other organisms. Beyond just implementing this change for the short term, environmental health clinics recommend that everyone live a fragrance-free lifestyle.

People often think that unscented and fragrance free are the same. In reality, unscented products can still contain synthetic or natural fragrances that are neutralized by chemicals or other additives to prevent a smell. Fragrance free means that the product may have a scent but the product that smells was added for its properties and not just to create a fragrance, for example adding coconut oil to a product for its properties.

Many people think that not using fragranced products the same day will make you fragrance free. Unfortunately, the fragrances that we use remain in the air, on our clothes, hair, and skin, and in our home in residues for longer than just one day. In order to truly be fragrance free, here is a guide which can help you make this change, and it is important to start this process at least two weeks in advance.

**Do not use perfume, aftershave, or scented toiletries.** One of the main considerations is ensuring that you are not using any products that contain scents. This can include





scented soaps, hair care products, lotions, cosmetic products including lip balms, or any other perfumed toiletries. In preparation for these events, you can get alternatives to these scented products using our [Eco Living Guide](#).

**Ensure your clothes are fragrance free.** If you usually use cosmetic and personal care products (as mentioned above) with fragrances, your clothes will have chemicals and scented products on them which are difficult to remove. When getting rid of these products from your clothes, it is critical to ensure that your laundry products are also fragrance free. Laundry products including detergents, fabric softeners, and dryer sheets usually include unhealthy fragrances. If your clothes are washed with these products or are worn after you are using fragranced products or wearing perfumes or aftershave **it will take multiple washes to ensure that the fragrances have been removed.** Since chemical sensitivity is a reaction to chemicals, regular scent-free laundry products can have harmful ingredients. Therefore, it is important to use brands that are known to manufacture healthy laundry products. For a list, please consult our [Eco Living Guide](#).

If you have [dry cleaned your clothes](#), they must hang unwrapped in a well-ventilated area for an extended period of time to ensure that there are no more fragrances or other products that remain on them.

**Say no to air fresheners.** Air fresheners can get fragrances stuck on your belongings, items, hair and skin. Beyond just air fresheners, the use of scented candles, potpourris, and incense can also leave a scent on your belongings, hair, skin, and furniture. Even if you may not think that it has left a scent, it can still cause symptoms in others. [Try least toxic alternatives](#).

If you are uncertain about how to go fragrance free, and choose only least-toxic products for all applications, check out our Eco Living Guide or reach out to us at ASEQ-EHAQ to help!

#### Resources

<https://aseq-ehaq.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/QandA-en.pdf>

<https://aseq-ehaq.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Fragrances-and-effects-on-health.pdf>

<https://aseq-ehaq.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/tips-on-choosing-products.pdf>



<https://aseq-ehaq.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/recomended-products.pdf>

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