



Association pour la santé environnementale du Québec  
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### How To Prepare to Visit A Friend With MCS

Procedures for the day you are planning to visit a person with MCS:

#### **Clothing and Laundry**

If you are using perfumed products, it is best to stop using them and change over to non-fragranced healthy options. Since perfumes are very hard to get rid of, it would be best to buy new clothes. Soak them in 4 cups of baking soda and 1 cup of vinegar in the bathtub for several hours or overnight before handwashing. Wash all clothing you plan on wearing at least twice this way, to remove any perfumes and other chemicals on new clothes. It is also best not to wash your clothes in your washing machine as leftover fragrance is still in the machine. Same goes for your dryer, so once clothes are rinsed in the bathtub, hang them to air dry!

If tolerated by the person you are visiting, you can also add a [fragrance-free liquid detergent](#) like Seventh Generation Free & Clear. Do not use regular detergent even if it says "Scent Free" because in many cases the manufacturing companies use chemical masking agents to cover up or hide the chemical smells used in their products. Since it is the chemicals that your friend is reacting to, she will react anyway – even if they are 'hidden' from her. This is the heavy burden of chemical sensitivity.

#### **Showering**

Clean the body and wash your hair with fragrance-free soap. Do not use any of your shampoos, conditioners, hair styling creams, mouse, leave-in conditioners or detanglers in your hair. Remember to ask the person what they can tolerate as triggers and tolerances vary from case to case! For a list of fragrance-free products [please click here](#).

#### **Moisturizing, Conditioning, & Deodorant**

Ask the person you are visiting if they can tolerate refined coconut oil, raw coconut oil



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or grapeseed oil. If they can, you can use these oils to moisturize your skin and condition your hair after coming out of the shower. Refined coconut oil has less of a smell and is tolerated by many people as is pure grapeseed oil.

Do not use any type of store-bought deodorant. You can mix a pinch of baking soda in 6 tablespoons of water and apply with a rag under your arms. You can also slice a lime or lemon and rub under your arms. Some people with MCS can tolerate fragrance-free deodorants but always ask them before applying!

## **Beauty**

Makeup should be avoided unless it is mineral-based and fragrance-free, and it is approved by the person with MCS. Do not dye your hair or do any hair treatments at least 2 weeks before you are planning to visit as chemicals in these products will linger on hair for days and can cause a reaction.

## **Shaving**

Do not use any shaving creams, moisturizer, beard wax, cologne or aftershave. If you need to shave do so a few days before your visit or if you must shave the day of your visit, you can mix grapeseed oil and castile soap to use as shaving cream.

## **Gas Stations & Perfumes**

Do not stop to pump gas the day you are visiting. Petrochemical fumes stick to clothing and shoes and can affect a person just the same as spraying them with perfume would. Perfumes are included in this section because over 95 percent of the chemicals in synthetic fragrances are derived from petrochemicals. Do not use any perfume at all, not even if it is organic or all-natural. This includes any essential oils as they contain chemical compounds that can cause reactions.

## **Vehicle & Home Maintenance**

Remove all scented air fresheners from your vehicle at least 1 month before visiting the person with MCS. Open your car windows each day and allow the car to air out as you drive to remove any residue of chemicals. [Read more about scented car products.](#)



Discontinue all use of air fresheners in your home at least one month before planning your visit. This means plugins, sprays, mothballs, etc. Let your home air out each week as well by opening windows.

Do not paint your home, use chemical household cleaners, fertilizers, bug spray or disinfectants on the day you are visiting someone with MCS.

### **Purses & Backpacks**

It is best to avoid bringing large bags when visiting as these can often pick up smells, molds, and other bio-contaminants from places you have visited. If possible, place your identification and main items in a small wallet or zip lock bag. You can also lock your bag in the trunk of your car if you feel secure doing so.

For families traveling with children or people needing to carry many items, use a washable diaper bag, purse or backpack, and wash following the procedures mentioned above.

### **Upon Arriving For Your Visit**

Be prepared to take off your shoes and place them in a bag, garage or on a shoe rack.

Don't be offended or take it personally if you miss something and your host reacts with strong symptoms. Try to be as loving as possible and follow any suggestions they may give you such as washing your face, showering, changing clothes, clipping or tying up your hair, etc. Here's a useful tip! If your hair is causing symptoms, tie it up and cover with a shower cap.

Remember this person suffering could be you. Think about how you would like to be treated if you were in the same situation. Place yourself in their position! After all, your friend is the same person – only now she or he has a disability and must be accommodated.

For more tips on becoming fragrance-free and chemical free check out our [Eco-Living Guide!](#)