



Effective Advocacy with Limited Energy: A Guide for People with Multiple Chemical Sensitivities (MCS)

Living with Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) often means navigating a world not designed with your needs in mind. Between managing symptoms, avoiding triggers, and coping with the physical and emotional toll of the condition, it's easy to feel like you have little energy left for self-advocacy. Yet advocating for yourself is essential—whether it's explaining your needs to employers, requesting housing accommodations, or helping loved ones understand your condition.

The good news? Effective advocacy doesn't have to drain your energy. Small, strategic steps can create meaningful change. Below, we'll explore ways to advocate for yourself while conserving energy—along with the resources and support our organization provides to help.

This is the first in a series of articles on advocacy. In the coming weeks, we'll delve into the many resources available on our website. For now, let's focus on the [toolkit](#)—a practical starting point to empower you on this journey.

What's in the Toolkit?

Our toolkit provides ready-to-use materials to help you communicate your needs clearly and effectively, without starting from scratch every time. Here's how you can use these tools:

1. The General Information

This section of ASEQ-EHAQ's toolkit provides a strong foundation for understanding the serious health impacts of exposure to fragrances. It begins by explaining what fragrances are, it details how they can affect health, particularly for those with sensitivities and it discusses fragrance free policies in healthcare facilities. Through the Questions and Answers (Q&A) resource, visitors can find straightforward explanations addressing common concerns, helping to clarify the hidden risks associated with everyday scented products. The section also includes a narrative literature review that summarizes scientific research on the broader public health effects of fragrances. Together, these resources lay the groundwork for understanding why fragrance-free policies are critical for public health.



2. Video

The toolkit also includes access to a short video created by ASEQ-EHAQ that highlights the challenges faced by people living with Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS). The video helps raise awareness about the urgent need for fragrance-free environments.

3. How to establish scent/fragrance-free facilities

The ASEQ-EHAQ toolkit also features a dedicated section on how to establish scent- and fragrance-free facilities. It provides practical guidance through resources like "How to Establish a Successful Fragrance-Free Policy in your Health Care Facility" and "How to establish a 'Clean Room' in your Health Care Facility," offering advice for creating safer indoor environments at your healthcare facility. The section also highlights examples of Canadian fragrance-free health care facilities in Canada by province.

4. Resources on how to go scent/fragrance-free

The Resources on how to go scent/fragrance-free section offers practical advice on living with less chemical exposure, including tips on choosing healthy products and a list of recommended fragrance-free products for daily use. It also provides additional resources for fragrance-free information and an Eco Living Guide to support a healthier and more environmentally conscious lifestyle.

5. Useful Links

The Useful Links section of the toolkit connects users to important policies and guidelines that support fragrance-free environments and protect the rights of people with multiple chemical sensitivity. It includes access to the CCOHS Scent-Free Policy in the Workplace, and detailed guidance through Indoor Air Quality Scent-Free Buildings – Module 6 and Addressing Multiple Chemical Sensitivity – Module 13.

6. Publications

The toolkit also includes a Publications section, featuring research by Dr. Anne Steinemann on fragranced product emissions, exposures, and health effects, with a link to her full list of articles.

7. Posters

The toolkit also offers a Posters section with printable materials that can be used to promote fragrance-free spaces. These include the "Why Fragrance-Free Facilities?"



poster available in both color and black and white and a poster provided by the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety.

ASEQ-EHAQ

You don't have to advocate alone. Our organization provides support (online and phone-based) where we can share strategies and encouragement. If you need direct assistance, our team can help draft letters. We also offer educational materials to share with doctors, employers, and landlords, reducing the need for you to explain Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) from scratch every time. Stay tuned for more articles about what's available on our website for you.