

Welcoming Guests with MCS: A Host's Guide

Hosting a gathering is all about creating a warm, welcoming space, one where everyone feels comfortable and included. For guests living with Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS), however, even small exposures to the chemicals contained in everyday products can cause serious health reactions. Scents, cleaning agents, or air fresheners that seem harmless to some can trigger headaches, breathing difficulties, dizziness, or fatigue in others.

The good news is that with a few thoughtful adjustments, you can make your home safe and inclusive for everyone. Here's how:

1. Skip the Scents

Fragrance-free is key. Avoid using air fresheners, scented candles, incense, or essential oils well in advance of your event. Opt for fragrance-free cleaning and laundry products instead of those labelled as "unscented," which may still contain masking agents.

2. Clean with Care

Before guests arrive, clean surfaces with simple, non-toxic ingredients like vinegar, baking soda, or unscented soap. Ventilate the space well by opening windows and letting in fresh air. Avoid aerosol sprays and bleach-based products.

3. Mind Personal Care Products

Ask all attendees (including yourself) to be fragrance-free. That means no perfume, cologne, scented lotions, hair products, or clothing washed in scented detergents. A friendly reminder in your invitation goes a long way in setting the tone for an inclusive event.

4. Choose Safe Materials

Some materials, like new plastics or freshly painted surfaces, can off-gas chemicals that cause reactions. If possible, host gatherings in well-ventilated areas or outdoors. Use

sustainable or recyclable serving items - such as wood or stainless steel - instead of plastic when you can. It's better for the environment and health.

5. Offer Food Mindfully

If you're serving food, check with your guest about any sensitivities, allergies, or preferred brands. People with MCS react to additives, colouring, and preservatives. Simple, fresh, home-prepared meals are usually best.

6. Communicate and Collaborate

If you're unsure what your guest needs, just ask! A quick conversation beforehand helps avoid misunderstandings and shows genuine care. Your openness can make a world of difference.

Creating a Culture of Care

Being fragrance-free and chemical-conscious isn't just about accommodation; it's about fostering inclusion, empathy, and community well-being. By making your home accessible to people with MCS, you're helping to build a more compassionate and healthy environment for everyone.