

## What can you do?

- Be considerate of those who are sensitive to fragrances.
- If you do use scented products, use them sparingly. A general guideline is that the scent should not be detectable more than one arm's length away from you and do not apply scented products in a public area.
- Avoid using products that give off chemical-based scents in your work area.
- Avoid using laundry or cleaning agents that are scented and air out dry cleaned clothing before wearing.

## What to do if scent sensitive

- Comfortably approach the scented individual and let him/her know how you react to fragrances.
- Inform your supervisor or instructor of your sensitivities, your symptoms and the types of exposures that improve or worsen your symptoms.
- Consult with your physician about your symptoms.
- Consult the resources listed in this guideline for further information or assistance.

## Approached about your scent?

- If someone informs you that the fragrance products that you use or wear are a problem, understand that it is not about you as a person or about your choice of fragrance but it is about the chemicals in the fragrance product.
- Discuss the issue openly. Ask questions about the health impact on the person, the types of symptoms experienced, the factors which make the person's symptoms better/worse.
- Empathize with the individual, work with cooperation and understanding towards a satisfactory resolution.

For more information and helpful resources,  
visit the following link:

**Canada Safety Council**

<http://safety-council.org/workplace-safety/perfume-in-the-workplace>

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# Scent Aware *Workplace Information*



*The Pembina Trails School Division is committed  
to a safe and healthy environment for all staff,  
students and visitors.*



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## Purpose

Schools today are committed to a safe and healthy environment for all staff, students and visitors. This guideline is intended to:

1. Increase awareness within our schools about the potential impact of fragrance chemicals on the health, well-being, productivity and lifestyle of those affected.
2. Ask for the voluntary cooperation towards a scent-reduced environment.
3. Provide steps for responding to scent-related issues.

## What is the issue?

Exposure to perfumes and other scented products can trigger serious health reactions in individuals with asthma, allergies, migraines and/or chemical sensitivity. Fragrances are found in a wide range of products. Common scented products include perfume, cologne, aftershave, deodorant, soap, shampoo, hairspray, body spray, make-up and powders. Other examples with added scents could be air fresheners, fabric softeners, laundry detergents, cleaners, carpet deodorizers and/or facial tissues.

Generally, it is a personal choice to use fragrances; however, fragrance chemicals are by their very nature shared. The chemicals vaporize into the air and are easily inhaled by those around us. Today's scented products are made up of a complex mixture of chemicals which can contribute to indoor air quality problems and cause health problems.

Fragrance chemicals are known to be skin sensitizers. Some may also be respiratory tract irritants which can trigger asthma and breathing difficulties. Asthmatics commonly cite fragrances as irritating and exacerbating their asthma. Fragrances are also implicated in vascular changes that can trigger migraines in susceptible individuals. Individuals with chemical sensitivities can experience symptoms at very low levels in the air, far below those known to cause harmful effects in the general population.

Susceptible individuals can experience a variety of symptoms including headache, sore throat, runny nose, sinus congestion, wheezing, shortness of breath, dizziness, anxiety, anger, nausea, fatigue, mental confusion and an inability to concentrate. Although mechanisms by which fragrance chemicals act to produce symptoms are not yet understood, the impact on all those affected can be quite severe resulting in great difficulty in work and study activities.

## Working towards being scent-aware

This guideline is intended to raise the awareness within the working environment about the potential impact of fragrance chemicals on the health, well-being, productivity and lifestyle of those affected. Information on scent awareness can be disseminated through posters, websites, brochures and training sessions with staff where appropriate.

In order to protect those individuals with fragrance sensitivities and to possibly prevent others from developing such sensitivities, the employer may ask for voluntary cooperation towards a scent-reduced environment. All staff, students and visitors are strongly encouraged to avoid or reduce the use of fragrance products, and to replace them with unscented alternatives. This is a request to voluntarily refrain from chemical-based scented products and not a ban on scented products.

## What can your workplace do?

This guideline is intended to raise the awareness within the working environment about the potential impact of recognizing that chemicals can negatively impact indoor air quality, the workplace should:

- Promote the reduction of unnecessary use of chemicals.
- Promote the use of environmentally friendly materials.
- Target harmful chemicals and implement controls to effectively prevent or minimize their release into the general air as a result of building, maintenance, custodial, research and teaching activities.
- Support the best possible air quality practicably attainable, by means of proper ventilation and proper maintenance of building mechanical ventilation systems.
- Develop proper information and training to support the issue.

