

Sensitivities and Allergens

Employers are responsible for ensuring the health, safety and welfare at work of all workers (*Saskatchewan Employment Act*, PART III, 3-8). Exposure to scents presents a health hazard for many individuals. To control and/or minimize the adverse reactions to individuals with sensitivities, employers develop a scent free policy. The use of scented personal products by staff, physicians, clients, residents, visitors, contractors and volunteers may be prohibited.

What types of products contain scents?

Scents are included in a very large range of products including:

- flowers
- shampoo and conditioners
- hairsprays
- deodorants
- colognes & aftershaves
- fragrances & perfumes
- lotions & creams
- potpourri
- industrial and household chemicals
- soaps
- cosmetics
- air fresheners & deodorizers
- oils
- candles
- diapers
- some types of garbage bags

Each product can contain dozens or even hundreds of scent-related chemicals. Can you think of any other products?

Can scents cause health problems?

When scented products have been blamed for adversely affecting a person's health, some or all of the following symptoms have been reported:

- headaches
- dizziness, lightheadedness
- nausea
- fatigue
- weakness
- insomnia
- malaise
- confusion
- loss of appetite
- depression
- anxiety
- numbness
- upper respiratory symptoms
- shortness of breath
- difficulty with concentration
- skin irritation

Certain odours, even in the smallest amounts, may trigger an attack. The severity of these symptoms can vary. Some people report mild irritation while others are incapacitated and/or must give up many 'normal' activities in order to avoid exposure (such as going to public places).

Fragrance Free/Unscented

This means that there have been no fragrances added to the product, or that a masking agent has been added in order to hide the scents from the other ingredients in the product.

Notifications

Healthcare workers may respectfully communicate to all clients, residents and visitors about the scent-free policy and educate all persons entering the facility about the health effects of scented products. Facilities may display appropriate information and signage to notify clients, residents and visitors to refrain from wearing scented products and bringing scented products and flowers into the workplace.

source: adapted from Sunrise Health Region, Sensitivities and Allergens Safety Talk, January 7, 2013

Safety Talk Discussion

Be Accountable: Choose safety - work safe - and go home injury free!