

## Scientific Study

# Prevalence of Fragrance Sensitivity

**“Scientists say that 30.5% of the general population experience scented products on others irritating.”**

Once thought to be pleasant and socially acceptable, fragrances are quickly becoming the next cigarette smoke, gradually being banned in schools, the workplace, medical facilities, some churches, and other public access areas.

Fragrances are now recognized as containing many of the same carcinogens as cigarette smoke. Even the most expensive fragrances are no better than cheap cologne. Both are loaded with as many as 3,000 – 5,000 synthetic chemicals of which 80% have not been tested for human safety according to the Massachusetts Nurses Association.

Scientists have found that 30.5% of the general population experience scented products on others irritating. Despite commercials which lead us to believe that wearing scent is appealing to the opposite sex, doing so may actually drive others away.

Fragrances are not limited to perfume and cologne. Nearly all shampoo, conditioner, soap, lotion, hair products, after shave, and even make-up contain scent. Most people are wearing a myriad of conflicting fragrances which may not be harmonious in combination.

Air fresheners are somewhat of a misnomer. Essentially, they fragrance the air and are used in places like public restrooms in failed attempts to cover-up what amounts to lack of regular cleaning.

Scientists have found that 19% of people experience adverse health effects from air fresheners. This is not a simple dislike of the smell, but an actual physical illness which results from breathing the toxic chemicals which make up the air freshener scent.

The study also found that 10.9% of people experience irritation from scented laundry products which vent outside while residential dryers are in operation. Scientific investigations have discovered a myriad of chemi-

cals in these laundry products which are known neurotoxicants, carcinogens, and some of which are so toxic that they are listed on an Environmental Protection Agency “no safe exposure limit” list.

Irritations reported include headaches, breathing difficulties, and other health problems such as neurological symptoms.

Caress and Steinemann, researchers at the University of West Georgia, say, “This study reveals that a considerable percentage of the U.S. population reports adverse health effects or irritation from fragranced products.” A higher percentage of those with asthma and chemical sensitivity report health problems from fragrances.

Investigations show that fragrances are not required to be tested for human safety and that some of the chemicals used in them act synergistically to magnify the health effects that would be experienced by each chemical alone.

Worse, manufacturers are not required by law to list ingredients in fragrance. Hence, anything at all may be in a fragrance, safe or not.

Fragrances are a totally unnecessary addition to products, including our dress and appearance, and should be saved for special occasions. Indeed, manufacturers often add fragrance to their products to increase brand loyalty the expense of health.

### Reference

Caress SM, Steinemann AC. Prevalence of fragrance sensitivity in the American population. *J Environ Health*. 2009 Mar;71(7):46-50.

Steinemann AC. Fragranced consumer products and undisclosed ingredients. *Environ Impact Asses Rev* (2008), doi:10.1016/j.eiar.2008.05.002.

