



Breathe Easier—“Hold the Fragrances”!

The National Academy of Sciences reports that 95% of the chemicals used in fragrances today are synthetic compounds derived from petroleum, including known toxins that can cause cancer, birth defects, central nervous system disorders, asthma and allergic reactions. (Medical News Today, 23 Dec. 2006, “Chemical Sensitivities and Perfume).

While you may like the smell, fragrances can harm you and others around you--because they contain many of the same toxins as in cigarette smoke, including solvents like benzene, toluene and formaldehyde.

Approximately 100,000 newer chemicals are in commercial use that didn't used to be in our air. “In just 26 seconds after any exposure to chemicals, they can be found in every organ of the body” (US Dept. of Health).

Fragrance Facts

- Fragrance chemicals give off volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that are fine particulates. “Particle pollution has been linked to hospital admissions, emergency room visits for respiratory problems, and to premature death.” (Facts about Indoor Air Pollution, American Lung Association current brochure).
- EPA Material Safety Data Sheets showed that 20 of the most common chemicals found in many fragrances were on the EPA’s Hazardous Waste lists. These carcinogens and nervous system depressants and stimulants include acetone, benzene, benzyl acetate, benzyl alcohol, ethanol, limonene, and terpenine. (“The Health Risks of Fragrance Ingredients”).
- Air fresheners contain chloroform, and are on the “Top 10 Killer Household Chemicals” list. (US. Govt. Environmental Protection Agency of Pesticides and Toxic Substances, Washington, DC 20660).
- “Safe”, “Natural” or “Organic” do not necessarily mean safe or fragrance-free.
- The fragrance industry is unregulated and doesn’t have to disclose what is in their products, except to say “fragrance”. If the ingredient list says “fragrance”, the product contains toxic fragrance chemicals.

Short-Term Effects

- Fragrance is in the same category as secondhand smoke in triggering asthma in adults and school age children, according to the Nat'l Institute of Medicine. (Environmental Health Network of California).
- Approximately 87% of asthmatics cite fragrances as a trigger. ("Facts about Indoor Air Pollution and Your Health", American Lung Assn. handouts).
- Asthma episodes, even fatal asthma attacks (American Lung Assn.).
- Eye, nose and throat irritation
- Headaches and nausea
- SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome) can result from short term exposure.
- Fragrances contain respiratory irritants, which can trigger allergies, migraine headaches, nausea, sore eyes, sore throats, and irritated nasal passages.
- "Brief exposure to hair sprays produce acute bronchi-constriction in healthy people", (Study by Cancer Institute & New England Journal of Medicine).
- Absenteeism from school and work from asthma episodes.
- Asthma is the number one cause of school absenteeism (ALA).
- Fragrances can cause both fatigue and insomnia

Long-Term Effects

- Asthma, COPD, and other lung diseases.
- Damage to liver, kidneys and central nervous system.
- Birth defects, which are increasing at an alarming rate.
- Phthalates in fragrance chemicals have hormone-disrupting properties that are implicated in the alarming increase in genital defects, especially in baby boys, and reduced sperm count in males of all ages (DND Daily News Central 26 Nov. 2005). Phthalates can also cause infertility.
- Neurological and developmental disorders, such as autism, MS, Parkinson's Disease, Asberger's syndrome, and ADD.
- Cancer: Many synthetic fragrance chemicals are carcinogenic. Even essential oils, while derived from "natural" sources, become terpenes in the milling process. Like turpentine, terpenes are very toxic irritants

Common Products Containing Toxic Fragrances

- Scented laundry detergent
- Plug-in and other air fresheners
- Scented candles, potpourri
- Scented soaps and lotions
- Perfumes and colognes
- Insect repellents
- Scented fabric softeners
- Essential oils
- Antibacterial soaps
- Hairsprays and gels
- Citronella



WARNING!

"Natural", "Unscented" or "Organic" does not mean "safe"!

- If "fragrance" is listed as an ingredient, the product is generally not safe.
- Fragrance-free products can be found at most whole foods stores.
- Unscented laundry detergents can be found at most grocery stores.

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