

FURTHER READING:

ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENCE HAS CONDUCTED A STUDY OF THE HEALTH RISKS OF SECRET CHEMICALS IN FRAGRANCE SOLD IN CANADA.

NOT SO SEXY IS AVAILABLE AT:

[HTTP://WWW.TOXICNATION.CA/NODE/278](http://www.toxicnation.ca/node/278)

AN EARLIER REPORT ON THE SAME TOPIC WAS PREPARED BY THE ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING GROUP IN THE UNITED STATES. ENTITLED

NOT TOO PRETTY, IT'S AVAILABLE AT:

[HTTP://WWW.EWG.ORG/REPORTS/NOTTOOPRETTY](http://www.ewg.org/reports/nottoopretty)

SEVERAL STUDIES HAVE BEEN DONE EXAMINING THE LEVELS OF CHEMICALS FOUND IN OUR BODIES. A CANADIAN "BODY BURDEN" REPORT, ALSO AN

ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENCE PROJECT, IS AVAILABLE ONLINE AT:

[HTTP://WWW.TOXICNATION.CA/TOXICNATION-STUDIES](http://www.toxicnation.ca/toxicnation-studies)

ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING GROUP HAS COMPLETED A BODY BURDEN STUDY

FOCUSED ON NEWBORNS AVAILABLE AT:

[HTTP://WWW.EWG.ORG/REPORTS/BODYBURDEN2/EXECsumm.PHP](http://www.ewg.org/reports/bodyburden2/execsumm.php)

THE DAVID SUZUKI FOUNDATION IS CURRENTLY (MAY 2010) DEVELOPING A DATABASE OF THE PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS USED BY CANADIANS.

MORE INFORMATION INCLUDING HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS SURVEY

IS AVAILABLE AT:

[HTTP://WWW.DAVIDSUZUKI.ORG/ISSUES/HEALTH/TAKE-ACTION/PARTICIPATE-IN-OUR-SURVEY-OF-TOXIC-INGREDIENTS-IN-COSMETICS/](http://www.davidsuzuki.org/issues/health/take-action/participate-in-our-survey-of-toxic-ingredients-in-cosmetics/)

OTHER RESOURCES:

PEI ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH CO-OP:

[HTTP://WWW.PEIENVIRONMENTALHEALTH.ORG/](http://www.peienvironmentalhealth.org/)

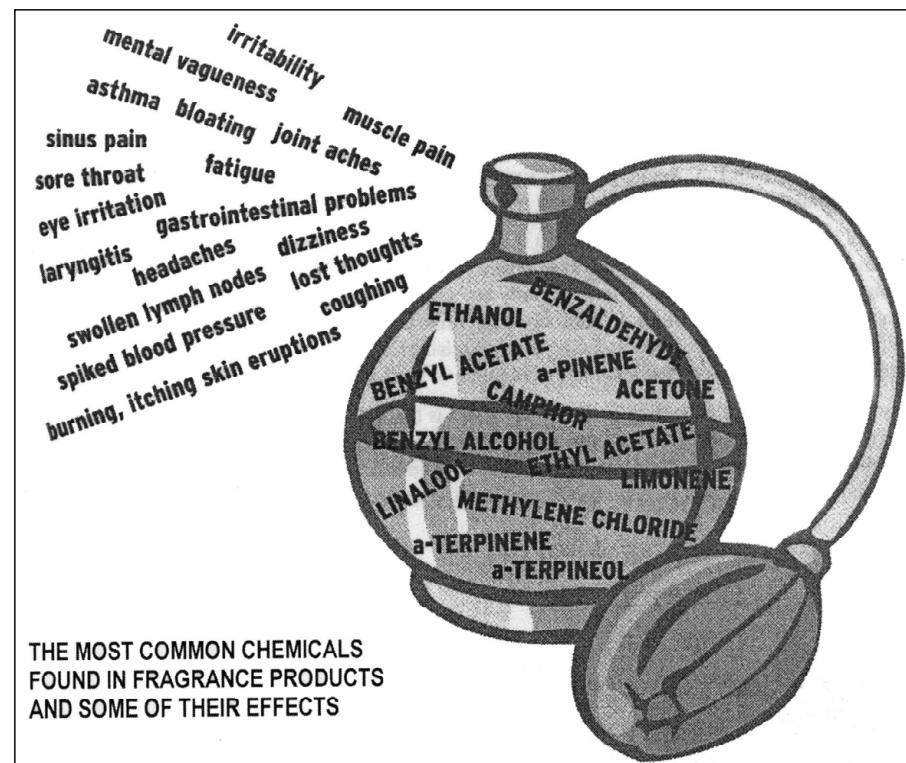
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF NOVA SCOTIA:

[HTTP://WWW.ENVIRONMENTALHEALTH.CA](http://www.environmentalhealth.ca)

FRAGRANCE

A guide for your health

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Source:

Identification of Polar Volatile Organic Compounds in Consumer Products and Common Microenvironments, Lance Wallace, US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Warrenton VA; William C. Nelson, US EPA, Research Triangle Park, NC; March 1991. (The composition has likely since changed but this is no reason to be less concerned.)

Scent Free

“THE FRAGRANCE AND COSMETIC
INDUSTRY IS THE LEAST-REGULATED
INDUSTRY.”
-Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

A brief history, impacts and information.

Scent free policies are becoming more common in our community. One aspect which people may not understand however, is that the concerns do not centre on the fact a product has a scent or fragrance, but rather that the largely petroleum-based chemicals used to make that scent can cause serious health effects

Further, while most of the ingredients used in fragranced products are derived from petroleum, there are exceptions, and these exceptions must lead to a recognition that “natural” does not necessarily mean “safe.” Examples include products made from tea tree oil, citrus oils, pine derived terpenes, and eucalyptus. All are known to trigger asthma and cause negative symptoms in the central nervous system, just as petroleum derived ingredients do. (Tea Tree oil has significant anti-bacterial properties; the everyday use of anti-bacterials is causing concern among public health officials for its potential connection to the increasing rates of antibiotic resistance.)

This connection to the central nervous system (CNS) is fundamental to the widespread use of fragrances by the manufacturers of these products, although the intent is not to cause the now recognized negative effects. Rather, those marketing these products are very aware of the positive CNS effect of fragrances on our emotions, and between scent and memory. Unfortunately the positive emotional effects are outweighed by the negative physical symptoms these chemicals also provoke in increasing numbers of people.

As an example of just how potent these CNS effects can be, a study conducted in Japan in 1995 found that fragrance derived from citrus oil was more effective in alleviating depression than were prescription anti-depressants¹. While this can be seen in some circumstances as a positive aspect of fragrances, the mere fact that these chemicals can be as potent as this is reason for concern.

An examination of the history of the fragrance industry also gives cause for concern. Historically, fragrances used to make perfumes were derived primarily from the essential oils of common and exotic flowers. However, since WWII and the ensuing development of the petroleum and synthetic chemicals industries, most fragranced products use synthetically derived chemicals, including synthetic essential oils. It is important to note that chemicals such as chlorine and the aromatic phenols found in household products today were used during the World Wars as chemical weapons; ether has long been used as an anesthetic. The human health effects from these chemicals have been well-known for some time.

The chemical industry and some toxicologists will say these known effects are dose-dependent and that we are exposed to such low doses our health is not affected. However, this does not take into account the cumulative aspect or multitude of exposures to low doses, nor does it acknowledge the synergistic effect of the mixtures or combinations of chemicals we are exposed to. We are not exposed to one of these chemicals once over our lifetime – our exposures occur again and again and to mixtures of chemicals rather than to individual chemicals. One can also look at the example of drugs used in medicine in very small doses as indication that small doses can have an effect.

Unfortunately government regulation of the fragrance industry has been haphazard at best. While many of the ingredients are listed in the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Hazardous Waste Database, for instance, and some have actually been banned for use in the United States and Canada, an examination of these products has found these ingredients still being used. Protection given the industry under the purview of “trade secrets” means full disclosure is not required. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the body responsible for regulating the industry in the US, acknowledges “the fragrance and cosmetic industry is the least-regulated industry².” From the FDA website: “Cosmetic products and ingredients are not subject to FDA premarket approval authority, with the exception of color additives.”

While on the surface, information on Health Canada’s website relating to recent improvements to the Canadian Cosmetic Regulations may give readers the impression the industry is better regulated here, a closer examination shows this is not the case. While cosmetics manufactured in Canada must now include a list of ingredients on the label, the specific chemicals used to create the fragrance are not disclosed; only the terms “fragrance” or “parfum” are required to be used. As well, imported products sold in Canada do not have the same labeling requirements.

Initially it was thought that only a certain segment of the population is affected by these chemicals. However, the striking increase in the numbers of people with sensitivities and/or asthma, as well as other conditions linked to these chemicals such as learning disabilities, neurological conditions, and developmental issues, is leading to a growing recognition that under the right circumstances virtually anyone may develop health problems from exposures to fragrances. Given that children have well-recognized vulnerabilities it is of particular importance to eliminate their exposures to these products.

¹ “Effects of citrus fragrance on immune function and depressants” Komori, T.; Fujiwara, R.; Tanida, M.; Nomura, J.; Yokoyama, MM; Dept. of Psychiatry, Mie University School of Medicine, Japan; from the Journal Neuroimmunomodulation, 1995 May- June, 2:3, 174-180.

² Quote attributed to John Bailey, PhD, Director, color and cosmetics, FDA, as noted in the article “Sweet Poison: What Your Nose Can’t Tell You About the Dangers of Perfume,” Andrea, DesJardins, 1997.