WCH Fragrance-free Policy
Staff Orientation

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Background Information

- WCH Environmental Health Clinic is the *only* academically-affiliated, provincially-funded clinic in Ontario that addresses environmental sensitivities.


- All hospitals have an obligation to protect patients, ensuring they don’t become ill when they seek and receive care.
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<tr>
<th>N2</th>
<th>Could we use a fact re: environmental sensitivities - 60-80% are women</th>
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<td>Nancy, 2/13/2009</td>
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Background Information

INDOOR AIR QUALITY

- 80 – 90 percent of our time is spent indoors

- Indoor air is 2 – 5 times more polluted than outdoor air

- Fragrances are the most obvious indoor air pollutant 2nd to tobacco smoke
Background Information

Common sources of Fragrance in Healthcare

- **Staff and visitors** who are wearing perfume, cologne or aftershave; scented cosmetics, skin lotions or hair products

- Scented **cleaning products**, floor wax, paint

- **Healthcare-specific chemical emissions:** medications; chemicals used in radiology, pathology, endoscopy and laboratory; adhesives; and cleaning and sterilization of surgical and medical instruments (i.e. aldehydes).
Chemical components of Perfumes and Fragrance

- Up to 4,000 ingredients in manufacture of fragrances
- Up to 500 ingredients in a single perfume
- 95% are petroleum-based volatile organic compounds (VOCs), many known to be respiratory irritants/sensitizers
- Fixatives (e.g. phthalates) often used to aid persistence of the scent - known endocrine disruptors
- Some ingredients have been linked with cancer, birth defects and neurotoxic effects at higher exposure levels
## Common Symptoms Linked with Perfume Exposure

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Presentation</th>
<th>Exposure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rash</td>
<td>Watery eyes</td>
<td>Difficulty concentrating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dizziness</td>
<td>Runny, stuffy nose, sinuses</td>
<td>“Groggy” or “spacey” feeling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Headaches</td>
<td>Fatigue</td>
<td>Wheezing, shortness of breath</td>
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> FACT 62: More women than men suffer undetected heart disease.
Sensitivity to Fragrances

- Once sensitivity develops, symptoms occur with each subsequent exposure, even at low levels.

- Often difficult to determine which chemical(s) are involved.

- Severity of symptoms varies from one individual to another.
Sensitivities to Fragrances

Canada
- Approximately 1/3 of the Canadian population is bothered by fragrances (complain of symptoms from exposure) (Sears, M, Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2007)

United States
- 16 – 33% of U.S population “especially sensitive” to chemicals, including perfume (Bell, 1996, 1998; Meggs, 1996)
- 30 % of US population finds fragrance on others irritating (adverse reactions) (Caress, S.M. and Steinemann, A.C. 2004, 2009)
Sensitivities to Fragrances

Europe

- Danish study - ~42% of the population surveyed had at least one eye or airway symptom associated with perfume exposure (Elberling, J. et al., 2005)
Most Vulnerable?

- Asthmatics
- Allergic or “sensitized” – i.e. contact allergy
- Women and unborn babies
- Children – developing, active, eat, drink and breathe more per kg. body weight than adults
Asthma Facts

- Asthma affects approximately 3 million Canadians

- In Canada, there are 146,000 emergency room visits from asthma attacks annually

- Asthma is the leading cause of absenteeism from school and the third leading cause of work loss

- World-wide, the economic losses associated with asthma exceed those of TB and AIDS combined

Asthma Society of Canada, 2005
Asthma and Perfumes

- Asthmatics are more severely bothered by perfume exposure than non-asthmatics (Elberling, J. 2005)

- Placebo-controlled studies have shown that asthma symptoms can be provoked by perfume (Millqvist E., Lowhagen, O, 1996; and Millqvist, Bengtsson, U and Lowhagan, 1999).

- Case report: health care worker, no hx of asthma or reactions to fragrances, experienced anaphylactic reaction when sprayed in the face with perfume, and continued to need oral bronchodilator at 2 month follow-up (Lessenger, J.E., 2001).
Asthma and Perfumes

- Perfumes are a recognized trigger of asthma and work-related asthma (including healthcare workers)
Multiple chemical sensitivities (MCS) Environmental sensitivities (ES)

- Symptoms occur with repeated chemical exposure
- The condition is chronic
- Low levels of exposure manifest symptoms
- Symptoms improve when incitants are removed
- Responses occur to chemically unrelated substances
- Symptoms involve multiple organ systems
- 4 neurological symptoms most common:
  - Having a stronger sense of smell than others
  - Difficulty concentrating
  - Feeling dull or groggy
  - Feeling “spacey”

Prevalence of MCS/ES

Canada

- 2.4% (~643,000) of population reported diagnosis
- 3.4% women (~2.5 x more prevalent in women than men) (Park J, Knudson S. Health Reports, 18:1, Feb. 2007 – Statistics Canada, Catalogue 82-0003)
- 3.6% of all Canadian nurses experience chemical sensitivities (The 2005 National Survey of the Work and Health of Nurses)

United States

- 3-6% of population reported diagnosis by a physician (Sears, M.E., Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2007)
Environmental Sensitivities: Legal Requirements

- ES is a disability covered by Canadian and provincial Human Rights Legislation*

- Diagnosed individuals must be accommodated in the workplace

- Purpose: To prevent injuries/illnesses, reduce costs and health/safety risks

  http://www.chrc-ccdpc.ca/legislation_policies/policy_environ_politique_en.csp
Why Fragrance Free?

1. Improves work environment
   - Health and Safety (indoor air quality)
   - Equal access
   - Enhanced morale

2. Protects patients and staff

3. Decreases absenteeism and improves productivity

4. Links to organization’s Mission and Values
   - Respect
   - Equity
What Can we Do?

It is as simple as asking our community to:

- NOT wear perfume, cologne or scented aftershave products
- NOT wear scented products (lotions, antiperspirant/deodorant, creams etc...)
- LOOK for products labelled “fragrance-free”
- USE scent-free detergents and fabric softeners
What can You Do?

Do not wear to Work

- Perfume
- Cologne
- Scented aftershave
- Scented hairspray, mousse, gel, putty, oils
- Scented creams, lotions, sunscreens
- Scented deodorant/antiperspirant
- Scented laundry products
What Can You Do?

- Read labels - avoid products with fragrance in the ingredient list
- Try different products, to see what works best for you
- Start with the most accessible and least expensive alternatives
- Ongoing education for visitors, staff and patients
Corporate Initiatives

- Fragrance free education – public places
- Corporate signage – fragrance free (elevator banks, wait areas, lobby and inside elevators)
- Website information to staff/visitors
- Scripted messages placed on the main WCH and program lines to remind patients/visitors of FF organization
Corporate Initiatives

- FAQ’s for patients/staff (coming soon)
- Staff forums to increase awareness
- Webcast available for staff to view in future
- Ongoing review of corporate policy
- Managers may use this presentation for their staff as an education tool
Resources

Fragrance-free

- Guide to Less Toxic Products www.lesstoxicguide.ca/
- We Share the Air: Dalhousie University http://environmentalhealthandsafetyoffice.dal.ca/radiatio_1589.html
- Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/scent_free.html
- Fragranced Products Information Network www.fpina.org
Resources

Environmental Health and MCS/ES

- Women’s Health Matters – Environmental Health Centre
  www.womenshealthmatters.ca/centres/environmental/index.html

- Environmental Health Association of Ontario
  http://ehaontario.ca/

- Environmental Health Association of Nova Scotia
  www.environmentalhealth.ca/
Resources

Accommodation for ES/MCS

FACT 62:
More women than men suffer undetected heart disease.

QUESTIONS?

FIND A NEW WAY TO THINK

www.womenscollegehospital.ca
References/Bibliography

References

- McKeown-Eyssen et. al. *Case Control Study of genotypes in multiple chemical sensitivity: CYP2D6, NAT1, NAT2, PON1, PON2 and MTHFR*, Int. J. Epidemiol. 2004; 33:1-8
References

- The Lung Association, Ontario Division. All about Asthma Triggers. 2009.