



# How to be Fragrance-Free



**Why?** Fragrances are an ingredient in almost everything we use from tissues and bin-bags to moisturiser and perfume, often added to mask the smell of the product. A typical cosmetic can contain between 50 and 100 fragrances, but fragrance sensitivity is an increasing problem:

up to **30% of the public report adverse health effects from being exposed to scents** (*Steinemann*). Synthetic and natural fragrances can be absorbed into the blood through the skin and by inhalation causing a range of symptoms from migraines and rashes to difficulty concentrating, breathing problems, and even seizures and collapse. **Up to 72% of asthmatics are affected by fragrance** (*Mintel*), as well as many children, people with eczema, M.E. and those undergoing chemotherapy. People who suffer from Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) can have severe reactions to very low levels of fragrances in products that other people are wearing or have previously used.



## Did you know?

Once a person has developed fragrance irritation the **sensitivity is likely to become worse over time and with repeated exposure**. A healthy body can process and eliminate most toxins without any obvious effects, but this doesn't happen if the immune and detoxification systems are damaged, for example in

MCS. When trying to get rid of chemical toxins (xenobiotics), the body often changes substances into more toxic compounds leading to allergic-type sensitivity reactions (metabolic rather than immune-mediated). When these substances can't be eliminated the body tries to store them in fat or connective tissue and organs which can lead to **worse long-term health**

and an increase in other sensitivities. **To heal their detoxification and immune systems sufferers need to avoid the fragrances** that trigger reactions (improved nutrient levels will also help).

## What to use

1. Choose eco-friendly toiletries, cleaning and laundry products as they are less likely to contain irritating petrochemicals.

**Don't be fooled by clever marketing on the front of the product, always read the full ingredients declaration (INCI) on the back.**

2. 'Fragrance-free' and 'Unscented' do not always mean they are free from fragrance – it may be used as a masking scent. Check the list of ingredients on the back of the product.



4. **Watch out for and avoid** these terms that refer to hundreds of natural and artificial scents:

*'Perfume' • 'Aroma' • 'Parfum'*



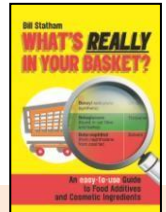
5. Many supermarkets now offer their own fragrance-free ranges that may be ok to use. **Check the full ingredients list and choose products that disclose ALL their contents.** If you are really sensitive you might also need to avoid *Limonene* and *Linalool*, *essential oils* including *Citronellol* and *Geraniol*, *Lanolin* in creams.

## Don't be fooled!

- Manufacturers can legally use the words **'natural' or 'organic' and still use petrochemicals in their products.**
- Many natural **essential oils** contain the same constituents as synthetic fragrances and **can also cause reactions.**
- **Manufacturers often only highlight some of the ingredients** eg 'contains natural oils' so read the full declaration on the back.
- Products labelled 'Hypoallergenic' can still cause reactions although it is less likely.

## Top Tips

- Don't wear perfume or aftershave. Get rid of air-fresheners (including in the car) as these **fragrances stay on clothes, hair and skin for many days even after washing**. Tumble drier sheets and fabric conditioner should also be avoided, for alternatives see below.
- If you live or work with someone who is very sensitive to fragrances the products below may be useful; check ingredients to see if they are suitable. If you have MCS, patch test products before use and be aware some ingredients may have links to foods in your rotation diet.
- If you have any other products to add, or want our detailed guide for severe MCS, please email us: [info@mcs-aware.org](mailto:info@mcs-aware.org).
- 'What's Really in Your Basket?' by Bill Statham lists ingredients to avoid. Available from all good bookshops and Amazon. Published by Summersdale RRP £8.68



## Cleaning

***These and other products are available at local health shops or online:***

**Laundry:** Bicarb of soda/ washing soda, Eco balls, Bio-D, Ecos unscented liquid, Sonett Natural, Violets unscented, Ecover Zero, Soap Nuts, Soap flakes (you can grate your own, then dissolve in hot water), Surcare.

**Fabric conditioner:** 2 tbsp white (clear) vinegar, Sonnet fabric conditioner, Bio-D fabric conditioner, or 2 tbsp bicarbonate of soda.

**Tumble Drier:** Ecozone Dryerballs.

**Bleach:** Ecover laundry bleach, OxyBrite, Hydrogen peroxide.

**Other laundry products:** Ecozone Lint Catcher, Violet's Unscented Laundry Stain Remover, Sonett Gall soap (stain remover).



**More cleaning:** Ecover cream cleaner, bicarb of soda with water mixed into a paste, Earth Friendly toilet cleaner, Microfibre cloths and mops for dusting and cleaning eg E-cloths. Steam guns are useful for sanitising kitchen surfaces and bathrooms, and cleaning floors, glass, ovens, and upholstery.

## Toiletries

**Shampoo:** Urtekram No Perfume, Suma Clean and Clear, Caurnie, Lavera Wash Clay, Jason fragrance-free, A'kin fragrance-free, Beaming Baby.

**Shower gel:** Urtekram No Perfume; Handmade Naturals, A'kin unscented body wash, Green People No Scent Baby, or any of the soaps below.

**Soap:** Pure Caurnie; Oliva; Urtekram Fragrance Free; Sodasan Organic Curd Soap (There Must be a Better Way), Sonett Neutral liquid or hand soaps; Ecover Fragrance Free liquid soap; Dr Bronner Pure Castile; basic handmade soaps with no 'parfum' or essential oils.

**Deodorant:** Deodorant crystals, PitRok unscented, stainless steel bars, Tom's of Maine unscented, Jason fragrance-free, OR mix 1/3 cup of bicarbonate of soda with ½ tsp of fine salt and apply after washing.

**Moisturiser:** Urtekram No Perfume; Nature's Baby Organics; A'kin unscented; Balm Balm, Avalon Organics Baby, or open and rub on a vitamin E or Starflower capsule or any pure vegetable oil e.g. almond, safflower, coconut, shea butter (vary to avoid intolerance).

**Powder:** Burt's Bees, Nature's Baby Organics, or try plain corn/tapioca/arrowroot starch.



**Cosmetics:** Earth's Beauty, Suncoat, NVey, Natural Skincare Company, Survana, MyPure, Absolutely Pure, There Must Be a Better Way.

**Razors:** Prize out any fragrant strips before using.

**Toothpaste:** Make sure it is fluoride free. Try Kingfisher, GreenPeople, Biosis Toothpowder, bicarb of soda powder, or Soladey toothbrushes.

**Suncream:** Badger Unscented, Green People Baby, Soleo Organics Sun Screen, Caribbean Blue, Jason, or shea butter (SPF 2-4).

**Creams:** Lavera Neutral hand cream, Akoma lip balm, Badger Diaper Cream, Balm Balm, Pure Potions, Earthbound Organics.

**Hairspray/ gel:** Suncoat products, or dissolve sugar in water as hairspray.

**Wetwipes:** Waterwipes, Tushies Sensitive, Nature Babycare Unscented.

For more information visit: [www.mcs-aware.org](http://www.mcs-aware.org)

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