



## **Fragrance Tidbits**

### **PEOPLE WHO REPORT REACTIONS:**

- As many as 50 million people in the United States suffer from allergic disease (AAAAI).
- In 1998, it was estimated that 26.3 million Americans have been diagnosed with asthma in their lifetime (ALA of Texas).
- The Institute of Medicine placed fragrance in the same category as second hand smoke in triggering asthma in adults and school age children (FPINVA, By Design).
- Up to 72% of asthmatics report their asthma is triggered by fragrance. Asthmatics and others that are negatively impacted by fragrance often have difficulties working, obtaining medical care, and going about activities of daily living because of others' use of scented products (FPINVA).
- Approximately 12.6% of the population suffers from multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS), a condition in which they experience reactions from exposure to low concentrations of common chemicals..." (Adams)
- [MCS is] marked by *multiple symptoms* in *multiple organ systems* (usually the neurological, immune, respiratory, skin, 'GI,' and/or musculoskeletal) that recur chronic-ally in response to *multiple chemical exposures*. MCS Symptoms commonly include difficulty breathing, sleeping and/or concentrating, memory loss, migraines, nausea, abdominal pain, chronic fatigue, aching joints and muscles, and irritated eyes, nose, ears, throat and/or skin. In addition, some with MCS show impaired balance and increased sensitivity not just to odors but also to loud noises, bright lights, touch, extremes of heat and cold, and electromagnetic fields (MCRR).
- [It is estimated that ] more than 5.2 million [with MCS] may lose jobs as a result (Adams).
- For the average person, breathing in fragrances from perfumes, colognes, hair sprays, deodorants, air fresheners and/or cleaners can just be a little annoying, "...but for a growing number of others, these smells, called 'emissions of volatile organic compounds,' can be a form of torment that throws their bodies into reactive overdrive. One whiff of a chemical cocktail...can result in a vast array of debilitating symptoms" (Ephraim).
- "Even if the general population isn't likely to suffer acute effects from exposure to fragrances, there are long-term chronic health effects connected to these chemicals that we don't fully understand yet," says [Carrie] Loewenherz [an industrial hygienist for the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health] (Lyman).

### **PERFUME INFORMATION:**

- Perfume formulations changed sometime around the late 70s and early 80s. Today, they are approximately 95-100% synthetic (man-made) (Pitts, Featured Author). Using crude oil or turpentine oil as the base material, synthetics are usually derived from chemical reactions (Bridges).

- Perfumes, colognes, and many other *scented* products contain an abundance of harmful chemicals, many of which are listed on the EPA's Hazardous Waste List. They also include numerous carcinogenic chemicals, neurotoxins, respiratory irritants, solvents, aldehydes, hundreds of untested and unregulated petrochemicals, phthalates (which can act as hormone disrupters), narcotics, and much more (Pitts, Featured).
- By design, fragrances are composed of materials that quickly get into the air. Once in the air, these materials pose serious health concerns for many with asthma, allergies, migraines, chronic lung disease, and other health conditions (FPINVA, By Design).
- Approximately 95% of chemicals used in fragrances are synthetic compounds derived from petroleum (USHR).
- Petroleum based chemicals are being found to cause significant attritional effects to the nervous system and immune system after prolonged exposure. Illnesses identified in the medical research include adult and child cancers, numerous neurological disorders, immune system weakening, autoimmune disorders, asthma, allergies, infertility, miscarriage, and child behavior disorders including learning disabilities, mental retardation, hyperactivity and ADD (attention deficit disorders) (Pressinger and Sinclair).
- [In 1991 a study performed by the EPA] Identification of Polar Volatile Organic Compounds in Consumer Products and Common Microenvironments, found numerous chemicals commonly used in fragrance products, including, among others: acetone; benzaldehyde; benzyl acetate; benzyl alcohol; camphor; ethanol; ethyl acetate; limonene; linalool; methylene chloride, one or all of which, or in combination with one another, cause, when inhaled, "central nervous system disorders, dizziness, nausea, incoordination, slurred speech, drowsiness, irritation to the mouth, throat, eyes, skin, lungs and GI tract, kidney damage, headache, respiratory failure, ataxia, and fatigue, among other symptoms and illnesses." Material Safety Data Sheets on each chemical confirm these findings (Dewey).

#### FRAGRANCE REGULATIONS:

- More than 80 percent of the chemical ingredients in these products have never been tested to see if they are poisonous to humans. Some have been tested only minimally (LA).
- By all accounts, the fragrance industry is primarily self-regulated. Safety tested before marketing is not required and ingredients used in fragrance formulas do not have to be disclosed even to regulatory agencies. In general fragrance is a very low priority among regulatory agencies and there is little monitoring of compliance or enforcement of laws that are in place. There is a self-regulatory system in place within the fragrance industry. Compliance with recommendations are voluntary and rarely monitored (FPINVA, Facts and Fiction).
- The fragrance industry has traditionally been a very secretive industry. For decades secrecy was required to protect fragrance formulas from being copied by others. Fragrance formulas are considered 'trade secrets' and do not have to be revealed to anyone, including regulatory agencies. The secrecy of the industry has led to tremendous problems in terms of regulation, monitoring, and impact on those that have problems from fragrance (FPINVA, By Design).
- The Cosmetic Regulations state that within 10 days after starting to sell a product, a list of ingredients must be provided. 'Fragrance' is considered a specific ingredient, and no disclosure of the potentially hundreds of chemicals within the fragrance is required (QGBS).

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**INGREDIENTS IN FRAGRANCES:**

<p><b>1. ACETONE</b> (in: cologne, dishwashing liquid and detergent, nail enamel remover) On EPA, RCRA, CERCLA Hazardous Waste lists. "Inhalation can cause dryness of the mouth and throat; dizziness, nausea, incoordination, slurred speech, drowsiness, and, in severe exposures, coma." "Acts primarily as a central nervous system (CNS) depressant."</p> <p><b>2. BENZALDEHYDE</b> (in: perfume, cologne, hairspray, laundry bleach, deodorants, detergent, vaseline lotion, shaving cream, shampoo, bar soap, dishwasher detergent) Narcotic. Sensitizer. "Local anesthetic, CNS depressant"... "irritation to the mouth, throat, eyes, skin, lungs, and GI tract, causing nausea and abdominal pain." "May cause kidney damage." "Do not use with contact lenses."</p>	<p><b>3. BENZYL ACETATE</b> (in: perfume, cologne, shampoo, fabric softener, stickup air freshener, dishwashing liquid and detergent, soap, hairspray, bleach, after shave, deodorants) Carcinogenic (linked to pancreatic cancer); "From vapors: irritating to eyes and respiratory passages, exciting cough." "In mice: hyperanemia of the lungs." "Can be absorbed through the skin causing systemic effects." "Do not flush to sewer."</p> <p><b>4. BENZYL ALCOHOL</b> (in: perfume, cologne, soap, shampoo, nail enamel remover, air freshener, laundry bleach and detergent, vaseline lotion, deodorants, fabric softener) "irritating to the upper respiratory tract" ... "headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, drop in blood pressure, CNS depression, and death in severe cases due to respiratory failure."</p>
<p><b>5. CAMPHOR</b> (in: perfume, shaving cream, nail enamel, fabric softener, dishwasher detergent, nail color, stickup air freshener) "local irritant and CNS stimulant" ... "readily absorbed through body tissues" ... "irritation of eyes, nose and throat" ... "dizziness, confusion, nausea, twitching muscles and convulsions" "Avoid inhalation of vapors."</p> <p><b>6. ETHANOL</b> (in: perfume, hairspray, shampoo, fabric softener, dishwashing liquid and detergent, laundry detergent, shaving cream, soap, vaseline lotion, air fresheners, nail color and remover, paint and varnish remover) On EPA Hazardous Waste list; symptoms: "...fatigue; irritating to eyes and upper respiratory tract even in low concentrations..." "Inhalation of ethanol vapors can have effects similar to those characteristic of ingestion. These include an initial stimulatory effect followed by drowsiness, impaired vision, ataxia, stupor..." Causes CNS disorder.</p>	<p><b>7. ETHYL ACETATE</b> (in: after shave, cologne, perfume, shampoo, nail color, nail enamel remover, fabric softener, dishwashing liquid) Narcotic. On EPA Hazardous Waste list; "...irritating to the eyes and respiratory tract" ... "may cause headache and narcosis (stupor)" ... "defatting effect on skin and may cause drying and cracking" ... "may cause anemia with leukocytosis and damage to liver and kidneys" "Wash thoroughly after handling."</p> <p><b>8. LIMONENE</b> (in: perfume, cologne, disinfectant spray, bar soap, shaving cream, deodorants, nail color and remover, fabric softener, dishwashing liquid, air fresheners, after shave, bleach, paint and varnish remover) Carcinogenic. "Prevent its contact with skin or eyes because it is an irritant and sensitizer." "Always wash thoroughly after using this material and before eating, drinking, ...applying cosmetics. Do not inhale limonene vapor."</p>
<p><b>9. LINALOOL</b> (in: perfume, cologne, bar soap, shampoo, hand lotion, nail enamel remover, hairspray, laundry detergent, dishwashing liquid, vaseline lotion, air fresheners, bleach powder, fabric softener, shaving cream, after shave, solid deodorant) Narcotic. ... "respiratory disturbances" ... "Attracts bees." "In animal tests: ataxic gait, reduced spontaneous motor activity and depression ... development of respiratory disturbances leading to death." ... "depressed frog-heart activity." Causes CNS disorder.</p>	<p><b>10. METHYLENE CHLORIDE</b> (in: shampoo, cologne, paint and varnish remover) Banned by the FDA in 1988! No enforcement possible due to trade secret laws protecting chemical fragrance industry. On EPA, RCRA, CERCLA Hazardous Waste lists. "Carcinogenic" ... "Absorbed, stored in body fat, it metabolizes to carbon monoxide, reducing oxygen-carrying capacity of the blood." "Headache, giddiness, stupor, irritability, fatigue, tingling in the limbs." Causes CNS disorder.</p>
<p><b>11. a-PINENE</b> (in: bar and liquid soap, cologne, perfume, shaving cream, deodorants, dishwashing liquid, air freshener) Sensitizer (damaging to the immune system).</p> <p><b>12. g-TERPINENE</b> (in: cologne, perfume, soap, shaving cream, deodorant, air freshener) "Causes asthma and CNS disorders."</p>	<p><b>13. a-TERPINEOL</b> (in: perfume, cologne, laundry detergent, bleach powder, laundry bleach, fabric softener, stickup air freshener, vaseline lotion, cologne, soap, hairspray, after shave, roll-on deodorant) ... "highly irritating to mucous membranes" ... "Aspiration into the lungs can produce pneumonitis or even fatal edema." Can also cause "excitement, ataxia (loss of muscular coordination), hypothermia, CNS and respiratory depression, and headache." "Prevent repeated or prolonged skin contact."</p>

**NOTE:** Unable to secure MSDS for the following chemicals: 1,8-CINEOLE; b-CITRONELLOL; b-MYRCENE; NEROL; OCIMENE; b-PHENETHYL ALCOHOL; a-TERPINOLENE (OLP).

Principal chemicals found in scented products are: These 3 are Main Ones in Most products people use everyday, shampoos, toothpastes, cleaning gels, deodorant and beauty products: COCOAMIDE

DEA (diethylalumine) TEA, MEA,-- detergent in most shampoos, moisturizers and more. PROPYLENE GLYCOL - industrial antifreeze- in deodorant, shampoos, shaving gels, moisturizers and more. SODIUM LAURYL SULFATE-AND FLUORIDE garage floor cleansers, detergents- in shampoos, toothpastes, more (OLP).

- Toluene (methyl benzene) was detected in fragrance samples and collected by the EPA in 1991. Toluene is a 'hazardous waste.' It is flammable and volatile, it attacks the central nervous system, blood, liver, kidneys, eyes, and skin, and it serves as an asthma trigger....Methylene chloride is also found in pesticides and septic tank cleaners (Pitts, Get a Whiff of This).
- Another solvent found in personal care products is benzene. More than 3,000 excess leukemia cases each year can be linked to benzene. One often-overlooked source of benzene is in perfume. Industry statistics show that, on average, people in just Britain alone go through about 14 bottles a year. As a result, rare chemicals in perfumes, such as benzene vapors, are released (O'Connell).
- The major effect of benzene from long-term exposure is on the blood. (Long-term exposure means exposure of a year or more.) Benzene causes harmful effects on the bone marrow and can cause a decrease in red blood cells, leading to anemia. It can also cause excessive bleeding and can affect the immune system, increasing the chance for infection. The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has determined that benzene causes cancer in humans. Long-term exposure to high levels of benzene in the air can cause leukemia, cancer of the blood-forming organs (CDC).
- Some women who breathed high levels of benzene for many months had irregular menstrual periods and a decrease in the size of their ovaries. It is not known whether benzene exposure affects the developing fetus in pregnant women or fertility in men. Animal studies have shown low birth weights, delayed bone formation, and bone marrow damage when pregnant animals breathed benzene (CDC).
- Phthalates are found in many every day products like hair spray, deodorant, nail polish and perfume (NTP, Facts). In May 2002 a coalition of environmental and public health organizations contracted with a major national laboratory to test 72 name-brand, off-the-shelf beauty products for the presence of phthalates, a large family of industrial chemicals linked to permanent birth defects in the male reproductive system. The laboratory found phthalates in nearly three-quarters of the products tested (NTP, Cosmetics).
- The animal research and one recent human study show that prenatal DBP [dibutyl phthalate] exposure disrupts development of the male reproductive system in ways that may increase the risk of testicular cancer. Cellular studies also suggest cause for concern among females. DBP increases proliferation of MCF-7 breast cancer cells in culture and promotes drug resistance to the action of tamoxifen in these cells. Sometimes DBP is not listed as an ingredient on product labels—phthalates are often concealed in the term "fragrance" (Evans).
- Some scented candles contain acetone, benzene, lead, carbon monoxide, toluene and more (Pitts, Whiff). In addition to many fragrance chemicals, chloroform was found in tests of fabric softeners (EHN) and a room containing air freshener had a high level of p-dichlorobenzene (a carcinogen) and ethanol (EPA).

#### AIR FRESHENERS:

- Researching air freshener/plug-in ingredients from their Material Safety Data Sheets we find that these ingredients are toxic. Let's look at a few of the toxic chemicals in air fresheners/plug-ins (Fleming):

Benzyl Alcohol - "...upper respiratory tract irritation, headaches, nausea and vomiting, a depressed central nervous system and a drop in blood pressure."

Camphor - "On EPA's Hazardous Waste List... readily absorbed through the body tissues...irritation of eyes, skin, nose, and throat...dizziness, confusion, nausea, twitching muscles and convulsions...avoid inhalation of vapors."

Dichlorobenzene - "extremely toxic, a central nervous system depressant, kidney and liver poison. One of the chlorinated hydrocarbons that is long-lasting in the environment and is stored in body fat. Vapor irritating to skin, eyes and throat. Banned in California."

Ethanol- "... derived from petroleum and is carcinogenic... toxic to the skin, respiratory, cardiovascular, developmental, endocrine, neurological, and gastrointestinal systems."

Formaldehyde - "...toxic if inhaled, poisonous if swallowed, skin and eye irritant, carcinogenic..."

Limonene - "...Carcinogenic, prevent its contact with skin or eyes because it is an irritant and sensitizer ...always wash thoroughly after using this material and before eating or drinking...do not inhale limonene vapor."

Naphthalene - "... a carcinogen that accumulates in our waters and marine life. It can be irritating to the skin, alter kidney function, cause cataracts, and is toxic (cardiovascular and developmental), especially to children. It can be poisonous if inhaled, swallowed, or absorbed through the skin.

Phenol - "...can cause skin to swell, burn, peel, and break out in hives ... cold sweats, convulsions, circulatory collapse, coma and even death.

Pinene - "...Flammable Incompatible with strong oxidizing agents. Eye, skin, & respiratory irritant. May be absorbed through skin...very destructive of mucous membranes.

- Air "fresheners," according to the Household Hazardous Waste Project, do not freshen the air at all. What they do is mask one odor with another, while diminishing one's sense of smell with a nerve-deadening agent (Pitts, Whiff).

- Colorado researchers have helped figure out why mothballs and air fresheners can cause cancer - their chemicals block the natural process of "cell suicide," allowing tumors to develop (Scanlon).

#### FABRIC SOFTENERS [AND DRYER SHEETS]:

- Turns out that the chemicals used in fabric softeners, including the fragrance chemicals, can cause serious trouble with your central nervous system! Exposure can be through inhalation from the exhaust of dryers or from skin contact with the treated fabrics. Symptoms include (but are not limited to): Disorientation, Dizziness, Headaches, Memory Loss, Neck and Spine Pain, Dermatitis. Let's look at a few of the toxic chemicals in fabric softeners (MCS-Global):

Alpha-Terpineol - "highly irritating to mucous membranes"... "aspiration into lungs can produce neumonitis or even fatal edema"... "can also cause loss of muscular coordination"----"Prevent repeated or prolonged skin contact"

Benzyl Acetate - "Carcinogenic (linked to pancreatic cancer). "from vapors: irritating to eyes and respiratory passages, exciting cough"...."can be absorbed through the skin causing systemic effects"... "do not flush to sewer." Benzyl Alcohol—"irritating to the upper respiratory tract"... "headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, drop in blood pressure, depression, and death in sever cases due to respiratory failure".

Camphor - On EPA's Hazardous Waste List. "readily absorbed through the body tissues"... "irritation of

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eyes, skin, nose and throat"..."dizziness, confusion, nausea, twitching muscles and convulsions"..."avoid inhalation of vapors."

**Chloroform** - "probable human carcinogen. Inhalation and ingestion are harmful and may be fatal. May cause reproductive damage. Irritant."... " may cause dermatitis."

**Ethyl Acetate** - Narcotic. "may cause headache and narcosis"..."may cause anemia with leukocytosis and damage to liver and kidneys"..."wash thoroughly after handling."

**Limonene** - Carcinogenic. "prevent its' contact with skin or eyes because it is an irritant and sensitizer"..."always wash thoroughly after using this material and before eating or drinking"..."do not inhale limonene vapor."

**Linalool** - Narcotic. "respiratory disturbances"..."in animal tests: ataxic gait, reduced spontaneous motor activity and depression... depressed heart activity... development of respiratory disturbances leading to death."

**Pentane** - "danger - harmful if inhaled... avoid breathing vapor" ..."inhalation of vapors may cause headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, drowsiness, irritation of respiratory tract and loss of consciousness. Prolonged exposure can cause dermatitis."

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*Disclaimer: We acknowledge that some in the medical community are uncertain of the cause-and-effect relationship between scents and disease. However, we respect the concerns of the individuals who report these symptoms. Therefore, we are not intending to make any claims in our attempt to share this group's experiences.*

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