

INTRODUCTION

The University of Saskatchewan is committed to creating an environment that promotes and supports the health and well-being for all who study, live, visit or work at all of our campuses. We recognize that scented products may negatively impact some individuals' health so we have put together guidelines around scented products in the workplace.

The intent of this document is to:

- offer stakeholders a general understanding and a consistent approach when addressing scent concerns in the workplace and steps to take to resolve this health concern,
- increase awareness and encourage cooperation from the community in eliminating scents in the workplace that can be harmful to others, and
- accommodate those with medical conditions related to scents.

This guide outlines:

- what you can do to eliminate scents;
- the process when scents are a concern;
- resources

How do scents adversely affect some people's health?

Most exposure to scents is not problematic, but for people with chemical sensitivities, allergies, asthma or other medical conditions, exposure to scents can cause a range of health effects. Symptoms can vary from severe upper respiratory and breathing problems to reactions such as migraine headaches, skin irritations, anxiety, nausea, inability to concentrate, coughing and fatigue. Even the smallest amount of exposure to scent can trigger an attack.

What are some common scented products?

Scented products most commonly used include:

- personal hygiene products (ie. Shampoos, conditioners, hairsprays, deodorants, colognes, after-shaves, fragrances, lotions, soaps, cosmetics, lotions);
- industrial and household/laundry chemicals and cleaners;
- air fresheners (ie. Deodorizers, oils, candles, potpourri); and
- various household products.

What You Can Do to Eliminate Scents in the Workplace?

- Choose unscented or fragrance free products.
- Be aware of the types of products you use that are scented, and eliminate usage when coming to or on U of S campuses.
- Inform external clients that your office is scent free.

What should I do if I have a scent sensitivity or medical condition related to environmental sensitives?

Having a scent sensitivity and/or medical condition related to environmental sensitives has been designated as a disability by Canadian Human Rights Commission (2014). The University of Saskatchewan has a legal duty to offer reasonable medical accommodation up to the point of undue hardship.

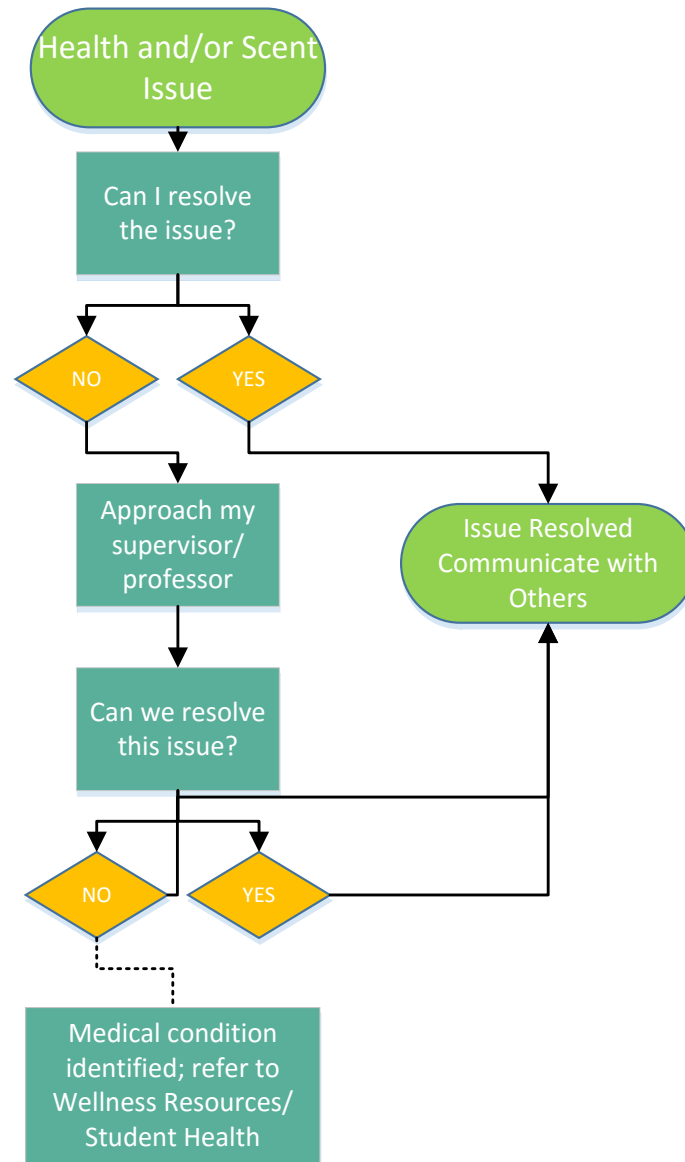
Please speak to your supervisor/professor so that they are aware and can ensure your department is scent-aware. If you are a U of S faculty or staff and require a medical accommodation, then please read [The University of Saskatchewan Medical Accommodation Guidelines](#) regarding the process. If you are a U of S student and require a medical accommodation, then please contact Disability Services.

As well, you may want to speak directly to any individuals who may be using scented products. Please see below the "Guiding Process When Scents are a Concern."

What process to follow when scents are a concern?

Dealing with a scent situation can be a sensitive undertaking and topic to bring up. There is a delicate balance between expressing your concern to the individual and appearing confrontational. At all times, it is important to deal with this type of situation in a respectful and caring manner.

The following is a process outline to follow if someone is wearing scented products or there is a scent in the workplace or area of study that is of concern:



The following are some recommended approaches to handle these types of situations on the U of S campuses with your supervisor, co-worker, professor or classmate.

1. Employee/Student

Direct Approach – Establishing General Awareness of Concern

If you are a person who reacts negatively to scented products and there is a scent in your surroundings that is causing you to have a reaction try the following:

- approach the person in a positive manner and share your concerns about the scented product being worn
- express to the person wearing the scented product how it is affecting your health (education is key). **Talk to the person in a respectful civil manner**
- suggest that the person visit the Wellness Resources website to review the guidelines for further information
- ask the person to consider switching to unscented products or refrain from wearing that product to work

In most cases, cooperation and understanding should lead to a resolution; however:

- if the situation is not resolved, speak to your supervisor, professor
- request materials from Wellness Resources or Disability Services to be posted in surroundings

Indirect Approach

If you feel that direct contact with the person wearing the scent would worsen your reaction or if you are not comfortable having the conversation, speak to your supervisor/professor about your concerns and let him/her know:

- what causes your reaction
- the problem(s) you are currently experiencing
- what you have tried to do in an attempt to resolve the issues
- self-refer to Wellness Resources or Disability Services to pursue a medical accommodation

2. Supervisor/Professor

If you are approached by an employee or student who has a negative health reaction triggered by scents:

- respond as quickly as possible
- ask the employee/student what may help them in eliminating a reaction from scent
- remove the employee/student from the scented area that is causing a reaction until an accommodation plan is developed
- if the reaction is triggered by a specific individual (s), then discreetly approach the individual or department and create general awareness of the scent concern and the U of S Scent Awareness Guidelines
- talk with your FMD Zone Manager about using scent-free soap and cleaning supplies
- encourage employees/students to review the Scent Awareness Guidelines and remain scent free on U of S campuses, explaining reactions co-workers/students can have
- ask the person to consider switching to unscented products or refrain from wearing scented products on U of S campuses
- invite Wellness Resources to present “Becoming Scent Aware – Creating a scent-free environment on campus” to your unit
- get back to the employee/student who is experiencing a reaction with an update of what has been done on his/her behalf. Continue to follow up and monitor the situation

Remember that the perfect solution may not be possible or even practical. For employees and students who are experiencing serious adverse reactions due to a medical condition or disability, further intervention and/or medical accommodation may be needed. The University of Saskatchewan has a legal Duty to Accommodate medical restrictions and limitations in the workplace. If a medical accommodation is required, contact Wellness Resources or Disability Services.

3. Individuals who have been approached about their use of scented products

- Do not take offense to this conversation – this is about the impact of scent on people, not personally about you.
- Work with others to find out what product(s) are causing or can cause a reaction.
- Learn more about scents from reading the Scent Awareness Guidelines.
- Become part of the solution and switch to a scent free alternative and refrain from wearing or using scent products on U of S campuses. Many scent-free products are available at your local supermarket or pharmacy. Others are available in speciality stores or online.

Resources

- University of Saskatchewan Medical Accommodations Guideline:
<http://working.usask.ca/wellnessandsafety/wellness-resources/index.php>
- For Faculty and Staff – Please contact Wellness Resources at (306) 966-4580 or
wellnessresources@usask.ca.
<http://working.usask.ca/wellnessandsafety/wellness-resources/index.php>
- For students – Please contact Disability Services for Students
<https://students.usask.ca/health/centres/disability-services-for-students.php#Registration>
- Lung Association:
<https://www.lung.ca/>
- Multiple Chemical Sensitivity Syndrome
<http://www.multiplechemicalsensitivity.org/>
- Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety
<http://www.ccohs.ca/>
- Asthma Society of Canada
<http://www.asthma.ca/>