



## Scented Products Awareness Program Questions and Answers

### What is the Scented Products Awareness Program?

The Toronto District School Board is committed to a safe and healthy work environment for staff, students and visitors.

The goal of this program is to:

- Increase the awareness within the TDSB community about the potential impact of fragrance chemicals on health, wellbeing, productivity and lifestyle of those affected
- Ask for voluntary co-operation towards a scent reduced environment
- Provide the steps for responding to scent-related issues

### Why are we doing this?

Exposure to perfumes and other scented products can trigger serious health reactions in individuals with asthma, allergies, migraines or chemical sensitivities.

Fragrances are found in a wide range of products, including perfume, cologne, deodorant, soap, fabric softeners and laundry detergents.

It is a personal choice to use fragrances, however, fragrance chemicals by their very nature, are shared. The chemicals vaporize into the air and are easily inhaled by those around us. Today's scented products are made up of a complex mixture of chemicals which can contribute to indoor air quality problems and cause health problems.

Individuals with chemical sensitivities can experience symptoms at very low levels in the air, far below those known to cause harmful effects in the general population. Susceptible individuals can experience a variety of symptoms, including headache, sore throat, runny nose, sinus congestion, wheezing, shortness of breath, dizziness, anxiety, anger, nausea, fatigue, mental confusion and an inability to concentrate, resulting in great difficulty in work and study activities.



### How are we increasing awareness?

This program is intended to raise the awareness within the TDSB community about the potential impact of fragrance chemicals on the health, wellbeing, productivity and lifestyle of those affected. Information on scent awareness will be disseminated through posters, web sites, information brochures and training sessions where appropriate.

### How are we working towards a scent-reduced environment?

To protect those individuals with fragrance sensitivities, the TDSB is asking for voluntary cooperation towards a scent-reduced environment. Staff, students and visitors are strongly encouraged to avoid or reduce the use of fragranced products, and to replace them with unscented alternatives. This is a request to voluntarily refrain from chemical-based scented products, and not a ban on scented products.

### What can you do to help?

- Be considerate of those who are sensitive to fragrance chemicals. Avoid using scented products and use scent-free alternatives, instead.
- If you do use scented products, use them sparingly. A general guideline for scented products is that the scent should not be detectable more than an arm's length away from you. Do not apply scented products in a public area.
- Avoid using products (e.g. air fresheners or potpourris) that give off chemical-based scents in your work area.
- Avoid using laundry products or cleaning agents that are scented. Air out dry-cleaned clothing before wearing.

### What can you do if you are sensitive to fragrance chemicals?

If you experience difficulties with a scent, you may:

- Approach the user of the scented product in a cordial and respectful manner
- Explain your physical reactions to scented products
- Seek their understanding and co-operation

If you feel uncomfortable or If the concern persists, report it to your Principal or immediate supervisor.



Any employee with concerns about a scented product should advise his/her Principal or complete the Health and Safety Concern form.

Any employee who experiences health effects that result in seeking medical aid and/or lost time injury must report the injury using the Employee's Report of Accident/Injury form. Once informed of the employee's injury, the supervisor must complete the Supervisor's Accident Investigation Report and submit as required.

### What can you do as a Supervisor?

If an individual in your work area or classroom is adversely affected by scented products:

- Listen to the person with respect and civility.
- Clarify the issue. Ask the individual to describe their health effects, the factors that make the problem better or worse, and the actions they are taking to deal with it.
- Discuss the issue with your staff or students in an open and non-threatening manner. Inform them of the health concerns that have arisen as a result of the use of scented products in the workplace.
- Request everyone's cooperation and understanding to voluntarily avoid the use of scented products in the area.
- Implement measures to reasonably accommodate those who are affected by scented products. Where employees are severely limited due to exposure to scented products, you may need to establish a fragrance-free zone. For meetings held in enclosed rooms, you may need to send out notices to attendees informing them of the scent-free nature of the meeting.