



Scents in The Workplace

Indoor air quality at work is a potential occupational hazard. Scents from perfumes, colognes and air fresheners are examples of air contaminants originating in an office environment. These fragrances, often from toiletries and cosmetics, can cause problems for asthmatics. If you are sensitive, you probably have done all you can to avoid these things; however, it can often be difficult to avoid being exposed to other people's products. In addition, dealing with this issue can be delicate.

You may consider approaching the person who is wearing the fragrance to negotiate an alternative. Often people, once aware of the issue, will offer to wear a lighter scent, or less of it. Sometimes the situation may arise where you will need assistance to educate others about your sensitivity. You may find that your supervisor is not only supportive but will even offer to create a scent-free policy. As with most new workplace policies, you need to be considerate of the various personal reactions. Focus your communication efforts to raising awareness that this issue is a medical one, not a personal one.

Often times, those who experience sensitivity to a particular fragrance may also be reacting to other indoor air contaminants. Therefore, it is best to report any health complaints to your supervisor or health and safety representative. The supervisor will assess the situation and the overall quality of the air in the building.

For More Information

To find out more about developing a scent free policy, visit the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (link to: http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/scent_free.html) or contact the Asthma Society of Canada at 1-866-787-4050 or www.Asthma.ca.