

chemical exposures. Of course, people who profit from the manufacture and sale of chemicals would like all of us to assume that "ordinary" chemicals are safe that commercially available products are tested regulated. But it's not so. Similarly, chemical profiteers would like us to believe that EI people are just a bunch of attention-seekers, neurotics, or genetically flawed weaklings who can't handle "normal" chemicals. But it's not so. Athletes, children, business people, scientists, farm factory workers, teachers - anyone can become EI. No one is immune.

How It May Be About You, After All

Like everyone else in this country, you're continually exposed to a barrage of chemicals. So why increase the chance of becoming EI by putting toxic chemicals on yourself? When you wear scented products, you breathe in those chemicals all day long, they're also absorbed through your skin. Just because you can't smell the product after a while doesn't mean that it's worn off. It's just that your nose is worn out has shutdown in self-protection. But that doesn't keep the chemicals from continuing to enter your body through your lungs skin.

In fact, becoming insensitive to the smell of scented products is a common warning sign that EI is developing. Unfortunately, scented-product users generally aren't aware that they are losing their sense of smell until they start using so much of the products that other people begin making comments or moving away from them. If you want to learn more about the manifestations of EI, so that you can better protect your health, see the book by Randolph Moss that is listed at the end of this brochure.

If it still seems incredible that toxic chemicals are in the scented products you use - or that even trace amounts of those chemicals can harm the

Individual, remember that commercial companies aren't in the business of giving people the whole story. Even ten years ago the idea that second-hand cigarette smoke could be harmful was just beginning to reach the public. It's taken even longer for the public to learn that many other things besides tobacco are put into cigarettes. But what we don't know, can hurt us. Choose to know. Be aware, for your own protection the protection of those around you.

For More Information:

Dadd, Debra Lynn. *Nontoxic, Natural Earthwise: How to Protect Yourself Your Family from Harmful Products Live in Harmony with the Earth*. New York: Putnam, 1990.

Lawson, Lynn. *Staying Well in a Toxic World: Understating Environmental Illness, Multiple Chemical Sensitivities, Chemical Injuries, Sick Building Syndrome*. Chicago: Noble Press, 1993.

Randolph, Theron G., Ralph W. Moss. *An Alternative Approach to Allergies: The New Field of Clinical Ecology Unravels the Environmental Causes of Mental Physical Ills*, revised ed. New York: Harper Row, 1989.

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Fragrance-Free Encounters No-Fragrance Spaces- *Not just a personal preference, but a Vital Matter of Health*

You may have been given this brochure by a friend, co-worker, relative, or professional who is trying to explain the need to avoid exposure to scented products. If so, this person probably is environmentally ill (EI) or is trying to protect the health of others who are EI. Someone who is EI (for instance, as a result of chemical injuries caused by pesticides or solvents) can be harmed by exposure to common chemicals, including the chemicals found in aftershave, perfume, scented hair products scented cosmetics, lotions, powders, soaps. A person who is EI not only needs to avoid personal use of scented products, but also needs to avoid other people who use such products and places that have picked up their smells.

As you probably can imagine this is difficult - both because "smelly stuff" seems to be everywhere these days because any one person's life intersects with the lives of many others. An EI person has to deal with this difficult task everyday, but to you the whole concept may be new and strange.

This brochure is written with *your* situation in mind. It's understandable that you may feel puzzled, annoyed, hurt, intimidated, or even vaguely insulted by a request to leave off the scented stuff when you're going to be around a certain person or going to be in a certain space. How are you supposed to understand this request when you've never had EI explained to you before? Here's your chance to understand - and to protect your own health at the same time.

As in many other situations, the best way to understand is to not misunderstand. Most misunderstandings about this subject arise from two common assumptions: 1. that the no-fragrance request is somehow about you as a person, 2. that the request is about smells as such. In fact it's all about chemicals.

It's Not the Smell, It's the Chemical

The problem with scented products is not so much the smell itself as the chemicals that produce the smell. Nearly all scented products currently on the market are made largely or entirely of synthetic chemicals, usually derived from petroleum or coal tar. Nearly one-third of the chemical additives used in perfumes other scented products are *known* to be toxic. It's not safe to assume that the other chemicals are safe just because they aren't yet known to be toxic. (Keep in mind that most of the chemicals used in this country, including 90% of the pesticides, have *never* been tested.) Just one perfume can contain more than 500 chemicals. Expensive products are just as likely as cheap ones to contain synthetic chemicals. Words like "hypoallergenic" "natural scent" "floral " and the names of various flowers don't mean that you can trust the product under the label - they just mean that the manufacturer wants you to *think* that the product is safe. Even "unscented" may actually mean that a masking fragrance has been added to the product to disguise the smell of certain ingredients.

The only safe assumption about scented products is that they contain numerous toxic chemicals which constantly vaporize into the air attach themselves to the hair, clothing, and surroundings of anyone who wears them. These chemicals are skin irritants, suffocants, eye and respiratory tract irritants, and neurotoxins. That's why being around someone who's wearing a

scented product (or who's wearing clothes that have picked up smells from past use of scented products) can cause an EI person to develop obvious allergy symptoms, (sneezing, coughing, watery eyes), to have an asthma attack, to develop a headache, to become dizzy or nauseous, to have trouble focusing or thinking or remembering, to experience sudden mood changes, to develop muscle cramps or spinal subluxations, or even to have a seizure or lose consciousness.

That's why wearing scented products isn't just a personal choice. It's a choice to impact the air space of others - in ways you may not be able to predict or control. That's why "I'm just wearing a *little*" or "It's not *perfume*, it's just my soap" are irrelevant responses. The chemicals don't care. They don't care how much you're wearing or in what form you're wearing it - they're going to vaporize into the air around you and do their chemical thing, even if *you* weren't planning to harm someone.

It's Not About You

Knowing that the problem with scented products is the chemicals they contain may help you understand that a request to avoid such products is not a statement about you. An EI person is not trying to insult your taste. Don't assume that the EI person is saying, "You stink" or "You make me sick." Nor is an EI person over - looking the fact that you probably used a scented product from habit, in an attempt to dress up, or because smelling good is highly prized in your culture. No one's trying to put you or your culture down - just trying to give you some little-known but vital facts. Smelling good may be a personal or cultural value - but being toxic isn't.

Don't be taken in by the fragrance industry's ad campaigns. They'd like you to believe that using

their products is a way to "express yourself." All you're expressing is their incredible profit margin: Products that cost manufacturers only pennies to make are sold for bundles of money.

You don't need to use poison to get clean or smell good. For information on truly safe products, see the book by Dadd that's listed at the end of this brochure. If you're worried you'll forget to leave off the smelly stuff on a day when you'll be around an EI person or be in a no-fragrance space, just tape a "No Fragrances Today" note to your mirror where you'll see it in the morning as you get ready for the day.

Yes, It's for Real - It's Widespread

If you've never heard of EI before, or if you've heard of it only through some sneering, uninformed mention on television, you may be wondering if EI is for real. Perhaps you're worried that someone is putting you on, or you wonder if the EI person's problem may be "all in the head," or maybe you assume that EI is a rare condition.

Actually, EI is widespread- and rapidly increasing. Twenty to thirty percent of the U.S. population has physical reactions to one or more types of synthetic substances. Unfortunately, EI people may go undiagnosed, or their problem may be improperly diagnosed as psychological in origin, because these reactions to chemicals often are delayed aren't something that physicians are taught to recognize. Since an EI person may look healthy, just as someone with diabetes or multiple sclerosis may look healthy, others often are reluctant to believe that the disability is real.

Anyone can become EI, because anyone's natural detoxification mechanisms can break down as the result of chemical overload- such an overload can result from repeated, "low-level"