

Contact Dermatitis Information Sheet

Fragrance (perfume)

We have found that many people are allergic to fragrance (perfume). It is a good idea to avoid fragrances to see if your rash gets better, before attending for testing.

Allergic contact dermatitis can develop at any age and usually persists for many years. Currently we are finding that different types of fragrances make up the five most common causes of allergic contact dermatitis in our clinic.

What are fragrances?

Fragrances (perfumes) are chemical compounds which may be natural or synthetic and have a smell or odour. Apart from being in perfumes themselves, they are added to many products to add a pleasant smell. Sometimes they are added to products to mask an unpleasant smell.

Common sources of fragrances

Home and recreational sources	Work sources
Colognes and perfumes, aftershave	Liquid soaps
Cosmetics, hand and face creams	Some hand lotions
Deodorants- fragrance causes more allergy than aluminium	Cutting oils
Hand gels, liquid soap, perfumed soaps	Floor waxes
Essential oils. These can be in the air from diffusers	
Toiletries, wet wipes	
Shampoos and conditioners	
Detergents eg dishwashing	
Laundry detergent and especially added laundry rinses- we see a number of problems with them	
Some toilet papers and facial tissues	
Toothpaste	
Some topical medicaments, some hand sanitisers	

How do I avoid fragrance?

Avoidance is generally the only long term treatment, as you cannot be desensitised to fragrance. Check the labels on cosmetic products, or the material safety sheets of products you are using at work to see if they contain fragrance. Sometimes it is called 'parfum.' In Europe, there is legislation which means that 26 specific fragrances are listed.

The most important fragrance allergens that we see are: limonene, linalool, alpha isomethylionone, benzyl alcohol, butyl phenyl methylpropional (lilial), cinnamic alcohol, cinnamic aldehyde, citral, citronellol, coumarin, eugenol, farnesol, geraniol, hydroxycitronellol, hydroxyisohexyl cyclohexene carboxaldehyde (Lyral), isoeugenol, oakmoss, lavender

Unfortunately, some manufacturers don't list which fragrances are in their products. If you are unsure if a product contains a fragrance, your options are to avoid it (best option) or 'use test' that product. This is done by applying a small amount of the product to a 3 cm by 3 cm area on the inside of the arm near the elbow. Leave it on, re-applying twice a day for 2 weeks. If no rash or itching occurs, the product is probably safe for you to use.

Some fragrance-allergic individuals may be able to tolerate perfumes if they are applied to clothing (rather than directly to the skin). Beware of the mist of the perfume spray and of getting it on your hands, as you may inadvertently transfer the perfume to your face etc. If you are extremely allergic to a fragrance, the perfume or cologne worn by your partner may also cause a rash on your skin. **Beware of essential oils in diffusers!**

Some products that are free of fragrances:

- Moisturisers such as aqueous cream, sorbolene cream, cetomacrogol cream, Hydraderm cream
- Dermeze range- wash, cream, ointment
- Simple products, **except** their deodorant and hydrogel mask
- Almost all QV products, including QV shampoo and conditioner, QV day face cream with SPF, but not the QV cream with the pink (not blue) packaging
- QV Naked deodorant range; Dove sensitive antiperspirant
- DermaVeen range including soap-free wash, facial moisturiser, moisturising lotion, cream, eczema ointment, sensitive relief eczema cream, eczema lotion,
- Clinique skin care products, however the men's deodorant has a fragrance
- Cetaphil Gentle Skin cleanser, Cetaphil Restoraderm moisturiser
- Neutrogena Norwegian formula hand cream- fragrance-free
- La Roche Posay Toleriane range
- Avene Tolerance Extreme range
- Bioderma Atoderm range
- CeraVe moisturising cream and range
- Olay Regenerist moisture sculpting cream
- Ecostore Ultrasensitive shampoo and conditioner
- Alchemy unscented shampoo and conditioner
- Ecostore laundry detergent
- Ego Sensesense sunsensitive
- Baby Dove sensitive moisture wipes
- Vaseline Intensive Care fragrance-free body lotion