



Camosun College is committed to a safe, healthy and respectful environment for its students and employees, and recognizes that scented products may negatively impact an individual's quality of life or health.

For the general population, exposure to scents is not typically problematic. However, from time-to-time, the presence of perfumes and other scented products may affect a person's comfort.

Furthermore, for a very small portion of the general population, scented products may present a health hazard.

For individuals with pre-existing conditions such as chemical sensitivity, asthma or allergies, exposure to some odours can cause a range of ill health effects. Symptoms can vary from upper respiratory problems to various types of reactions including: migraine headaches, anxiety, inability to concentrate, nausea, fatigue and/or skin irritation.

Scented products most commonly used include:

- Personal hygiene products (e.g., shampoos, conditioners, hairsprays, deodorants, colognes, after-shaves, fragrances, perfumes, lotions, soaps, cosmetics and creams);
- Industrial and household chemicals and cleaners;
- Air fresheners (e.g., deodorizers, potpourri, oils and candles); and
- Various household products.

What is Camosun doing about it?

In an effort to minimize the potential for negative effects to individuals from exposures to perfumes, scents and other odours, Camosun has created this guideline to:

- Increase awareness within Camosun of the potential impact that scents may have on an individual's health and wellbeing;
- Encourage voluntary cooperation in reducing the use of scented products; and,
- Inform and empower individuals on how to address scent-related issues.

How can you help?

- Be considerate of individuals who may be sensitive to scented products;
- Choose unscented products;
- Be aware of the types of products you use that are scented;
- Choose alternatives to scented products;

- Encourage individuals who believe they suffer from allergies to scents to visit their medical practitioner for a complete diagnosis; and,
- Do not wear or bring scented products to work.

Guidelines for Dealing with a Scent Sensitive Situation

Dealing with a scent situation can be a sensitive undertaking. There is a delicate balance between expressing your concern to the individual and appearing to be confrontational. At all times, it is important that we deal with a scent situation in a respectful way. If someone is wearing scented personal care products you may feel awkward approaching the person with your concern. The following approaches are designed to guide you in appropriately handling these types of situations in the office, in the classroom, and in public spaces at Camosun.

Employee/Student

Direct approach:

If you are an employee or student 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 the key). **Talk to the person in a respectful manner;**
- Suggest that the person visit the Camosun website for more information on our Scent Free Guidelines;
- Ask the person to consider switching to unscented products;
- In most cases, cooperation and understanding should lead to a resolution; however,
- If the situation is not resolved, speak to your supervisor/instructor.

The Indirect approach:

If you feel that direct contact with the person wearing the scent would worsen your reaction or if you don't feel comfortable approaching the person wearing the scent, speak to your supervisor/instructor and let him/her know the following:

- What causes your reaction;
- The problem(s) you are experiencing; and,
- What, if anything, you have already tried to do in an attempt to resolve the issue.

Supervisor/Instructor

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

- Respond as quickly as possible;
- Remove the employee/student from the scent that is causing the problem;
- Discreetly approach the individual who is wearing the scent and politely discuss the problem;

- Point out that Camosun promotes a scent free environment and encourage the employee/student to visit the Camosun website for more information on Camosun's Scent Free Guidelines;
- Ask the person to consider switching to unscented products;
- Get back to the employee/student who is experiencing a reaction with an account of what has been done on her/his behalf. Continue to monitor the situation;
- Remember that the perfect solution may not be possible or even practical. Also remember that, for employees/students who are experiencing serious adverse reactions due to a medical condition or disability, a more specific response and accommodation may be required. It is recommended that the employee contact the Employee Health Coordinator and the student contact the Disability Resource Centre; and,
- Refer those issues that cannot be resolved to the JOSH Committee, HR Department or Ombudsperson.

Instructor

If you are an Instructor 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:

- Attempt to maintain a scent free environment in your classrooms and labs by informing your students of Camosun's Scent Free Guidelines, prior to the beginning of classes;
- Direct your students to our guidelines so they can learn more;
- Explain the impact that scented products have on you personally;
- Ask the class to become part of the solution and stop wearing scented products to your class or anywhere on campus;
- If the situation persists, discreetly approach the student who is wearing the scent;
- Explain what the problem is and what kind of reaction(s) the scent triggers;
- Again direct them to our Scent Free Guidelines on the Camosun website and ask them to switch to unscented products;
- If the situation persists, speak to your supervisor about the situation. If the situation prevents you from teaching your class or a student from participating in the class, then the student in question may be in breach of the Student Conduct Policy; and,
- If the situation has still not been resolved, refer those issues involving a student who is not cooperating with a scent free request to the Ombudsperson.

For individuals who have been approached about their scented personal products:

- Do not take offense - this is about the impact of scent on people, not about you;
- Work with others to find out what product or products are causing the reaction;
- Learn more about Camosun's Scent Free Guidelines on our Camosun website; and
- Become part of the solution and switch to a scent free alternative.

Resources

- Fragranced Products Information Network
<http://www.fpinva.org/text/index.html>
- A Report on Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) from the Interagency Workgroup on Multiple Chemical Sensitivity
<http://web.health.gov/environment/mcs/toc.htm>
- Scents and sensitivity article in Environmental Health Perspectives
<http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/docs/1998/106-12/focus.html>
- Canadian Cosmetic, Toiletry and Fragrance Association
<http://www.cctfa.ca>
- The Lung Association
<http://www.lung.ca>
- Multiple Chemical Sensitivity Syndrome
<http://www.aafp.org/afp/980901ap/magill.html>
- Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety
http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/scent_free.html
- Scented Products Education and Information Association of Canada
<http://www.cctfa.ca/scented/>
- Asthma Society of Canada
<http://www.asthma.ca/adults>
- Environmental Sensitivities Research Institute
<http://www.esri.org>

Scent Guidelines and Awareness Programs at other Educational Institutions:

- Douglas College: <http://www.douglascollege.ca/employees/health-and-safety/scent-awareness-on-campus>
- University of British Columbia: <http://www.ubc.ca/okanagan/hse/health/scentfree.html>
- University of Lethbridge:
http://www.uleth.ca/policy/sites/policy/files/policy/Scented%20Products%20Guidelines_July%2019,%202006.pdf
- University of Calgary: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/scentfree/>
- Dalhousie University: http://safety.dal.ca/programs_services/scentfree/