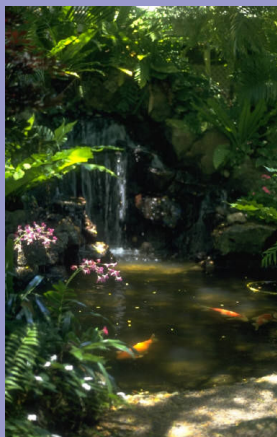


Sal's Place

“Well meaning family and friends often lack an understanding of how common personal care items can be injurious to people with MCS.”



Disabilities affect nearly every aspect of life, some more so than others. Multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS) is one disability that has a huge impact on life. The condition affects so many aspects of life that the limitations it places on people with MCS often seems overwhelming, especially around the holidays.

MCS may limit, among other things:

1. What a person eats.
2. What a person wears.
3. Whether a person can work.
4. Where a person can go.
5. Who a person can be around.
6. What activities a person can partake in.
7. How a person is perceived.
8. A person's ability to earn a living.
9. What personal care products a person uses.
10. Where a person lives.

The holidays bring about a challenge for most people with MCS because family and friends gather and eat together. Though that sounds like fun for most, it brings up many challenges for people with MCS.

One such challenge is the food itself. Since food allergies are commonly comorbid (occurring in combination) with MCS, the food present at gatherings may not be tolerable. This presents a situation where the individual with MCS may have to bring their own food; and to make matters worse, there is a high probability the host(es) of the gathering will take offense.

Another challenge is the quantity of fragrances participants wear in the

form of the laundry products they have washed their clothes in, perfume, cologne, scented lotions, scented hair care products, and other scented personal care items. Many will attempt to go fragrance free when asked, however few truly understand the myriad of fragrances in everyday items and, therefore, are generally unable to go completely fragrance free. Still others may refuse to even try.

Perhaps the most challenging issue to arise, and often the most painful for people with MCS, is the attitude and treatment they receive from others. Well meaning family and friends often lack an understanding of how common personal care items can be injurious to people with MCS. Their lack of understanding may result in hurtful comments and failure to consider a reasonable request.

People with MCS should be firm in stating their needs and refuse to attend a gathering if it is not in their best health interests. Alternative arrangements for festivities may include inviting others over instead of going out and making it clear on the invitation that the event is “fragrance free”. Festivities can also be held outdoors in the fresh air when appropriate, depending on the local climate.

Others should do their best to be non-judgmental and as accommodating as possible. Give the person the benefit of the doubt. If a person with MCS does decide to go out to an event, a dish of suitable food can be brought for everyone to try. Whatever your personal choice may be, be kind to others and have a good time!