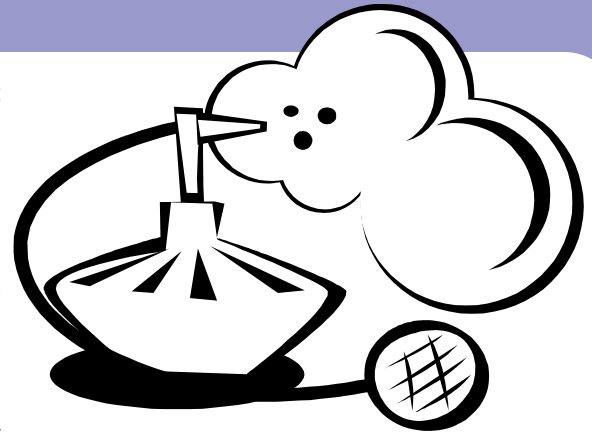


Q & A

Banning Fragrance in the Workplace

Q: I have a co-worker who applies expensive perfume at work and it fills the whole office and makes me ill. I've provided a doctor's letter to my supervisor and asked the woman to stop, but they both think my complaint is petty and won't do anything. What can I do?

A: A ban of all fragrances in the workplace would be best for everyone. Work isn't a popularity contest and people have a right to breathe and be healthy. Fragrances are a totally unnecessary addition to dressing in the workplace. If someone has an odor issue, they need to bathe rather than add scent to their existing odor.



Fragrance sensitivity is a disability which may be accommodated under the Americans with Disabilities Act. See:

JAN Accommodation and Compliance Series - Employees with Fragrance Sensitivity
<http://www.jan.wvu.edu/media/Fragrance.pdf>

Fact Sheet - Job Accommodations for People with Respiratory Impairment
<http://www.jan.wvu.edu/media/employmentresfact.doc>

For additional information on chemical sensitivities and general accommodations under the law, see:
http://www.mcs-america.org/index_files/Accommodations.htm

You mentioned the perfume was an expensive perfume. The cost of a perfume does not impact its acceptable use in the workplace. All synthetic fragrances contain dangerous chemicals which are not revealed on the label, between 3,000 - 5,000 of them... 80% of which have not been tested for human safety.

Fragrance sensitivity to scents worn by others affects more than 30% of the population according to researchers. See: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19326669>

For more information on the chemical composition and health effects of fragrances see:
<http://www.massnurses.org/health-and-safety/articles/chemical-exposures/p/openItem/1346>

Some addition links with quality information on fragrance sensitivity:

AAOHN: Synthetic Fragrances Pose Health Risk to 20 Percent of Workers
<http://ohsonline.com/articles/2008/09/aaohn-synthetic-fragrances-pose-health-risk-to-20-percent-of-workers.aspx>

Fragrance chemical allergy: a major environmental and consumer health problem
http://ec.europa.eu/research/environment/pdf/env_health_projects/chemicals/c-fragrance.pdf

Pollution & air quality - Indoor air quality - Scents
<http://www.lung.ca/protect-protegez/pollution-pollution/indoor...>