

We respectfully ask patients and visitors to use unscented products and no perfumes when visiting our allergy practice. Thank you so much for that kind consideration. Why? Read on...

Can You be Allergic to Strong Smells?

Individuals who are affected by allergic rhinitis and asthma may find that strong scents trigger their symptoms. In some cases the reaction could be the result of an allergy but often the scent acts as an irritant, triggering symptoms in sensitive tissues of the lungs or nose. Symptoms such as itchy, watery eyes, headache, nasal congestion, tightness in throat, and wheezing or shortness of breath occur in many individuals when exposed to strong odors. As pleasant as some products may seem, being in close quarters with them for many presents a very uncomfortable and dangerous situation. Some commonly scented irritants are:

- Perfume, colognes, aftershave
- Hairsprays
- Scented lotions, creams
- Soaps
- Some cosmetics and deodorants
- Shampoos and conditioners
- Laundry detergents and fabric softeners
- Air fresheners, potpourri
- Scented candles
- Cleaning products

While sensitive individuals can usually control their exposure to strong smells in their own homes, they are at the mercy of others in the workplace, at their doctor's office or in other public places. Since most people spend most of their time indoors, much of it at work, it is not surprising that they want a comfortable work place with good air quality. Some employers have begun to encourage a "scent-free" workplace by asking employees to reduce or avoid the use of scented products. This is particularly true of hospitals and medical clinics where certain patients may be particularly affected by strong odors, e.g., those with asthma. Even if you are not bothered by scents yourself, consider using non-scented or lighter products when in the workplace, a medical facility, on a flight or any other in closed-in public place.