

Hi,

I have become disabled about three years now and it's always scary when I have to travel to see a specialist or something, due to my needs not being accommodated.

I have developed MCS which basically means extremely low tolerance for unhealthy fumes that would bother normal people at a higher concentration- things like cigarettes and high-VOC paint for instance, but most of all, fragrance chemicals. When I'm near someone with fabric softener or other laundry scent on their clothes, or enter an area with room scent, I will get confused, clumsy, nauseated, exhausted, weak and sometimes emotional, as well as typical allergy symptoms like sinus pain, inner ear pressure/hearing distortions.

I've had trouble before with flight attendants drenched in scent (the way they are always going up & down the aisle makes them impossible to avoid- a scented passenger I can just move seats to keep away from) and when I complained the airline told me they were unwilling to infringe upon employees' freedom to scent themselves all they want. I hear some airlines are even scenting their air as a branding strategy but I believe that's on international flights which I don't use, luckily.

It is, however, very common for bathrooms to be scented on buses, trains, planes and their associated airports, depots etc. This is scary because I have to dehydrate myself, and fast, before a trip to lessen the need to use a bathroom, yet I sometimes have to go, and it may involve triggering my illness (no medicine can fix my symptoms- only time). Those awful automatic sprayers on the wall are the worst because if I get sprayed by one then the fumes will follow me around and I'll end up way sicker for way longer of course. Plus the stuff is nearly impossible to remove from clothes & hair so I'd have a lot of frustrating washing to do.

It would be great if washrooms were accessible to all! These scent (or scent-masking, like Febreze, which tons of people are reactive to) chemicals do nothing to improve the sanitation of a washroom- they only cover up the odors tricking foolish people into perceiving the bathroom as cleaner than it is. The better way is of course air filtration or ventilation, which actually provide cleaner air.

MCS affects about 3% of North Americans but there are many others who also need to avoid fragrance: people can end up in the ER from a scent exposure if they have asthma, migraines or anaphylactic allergies. Aversion to strong scents is common with chemo, pregnancy, and autism, making people very uncomfortable, perhaps even causing them to throw up.

The bottom line is, these products are purely optional, serving no function, so they could easily be banned from buildings and staff, for the protection of all. It isn't just passengers who are affected either. Once I complained to a stewardess about another stewardess' perfume and she was very sympathetic, saying "You aren't the only one bothered but there's nothing we can do" which I took to mean she or maybe her friend on staff was being sickened too, but they didn't want to cause conflict with a team mate by standing up for themselves, or maybe they'd tried and their boss wouldn't back them up. I know how scary that can be- the last few years I was still trying to work, I had to ask coworkers to abstain from their Bounce and Axe and so forth, and a surprising number of people get hostile about it. So my point is that a strict fragrance free policy for transportation, would be a big help to workers, as well as passengers. Even people who don't recognise that they're reactive to fragrance often find that, after a fragrance-free policy is enacted at their workplace, their blood pressure improves, sleep is better, and they are more alert and cheerful. There is really no downside to providing fresher air for everyone whenever possible!

Thank you very much for listening to my concerns. Feel free to contact me if you would like clarification or more info of any kind.

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