

Fragrance chemicals: What's the stink?

Many people experience unpleasant physical effects from scented products, such as perfumes and colognes. Sometimes it might be a headache or nausea when passing by a department store's fragrance counter or riding in an elevator with someone wearing a certain fragrance.

However, there is a growing number of people who suffer more severe reactions to these and many other types of products and chemicals. This condition is known as multiple chemical sensitivities and involves people who have developed an acute sensitivity to various chemicals in the environment.

People with MCS experience a range of debilitating physical reactions, some even life-threatening, to chemicals used in a variety of products, including fragrances and personal care products, deodorizers and cleaners, pesticides, wall and floor coverings, and building materials. It's a complex issue with a variety of triggering agents and physical reactions. Different people are affected by different products in different ways. The common factor is that the reaction, whatever the type, is very strong and disabling.

To better understand what drives people to use (or not to use) fragranced personal care products, a group of UC Davis researchers conducted a nationwide survey on this and other emerging environmental issues. They will share the results of the survey, what science can tell us about fragrance chemicals and environmental and human health, and where you can go to learn more about the ingredients in your favorite personal care products.

Fragrance chemical research will be presented Jan. 26 from 6-7pm by UC Davis graduate students Carmen Cortez, Jessica

Abbott, Jennifer Balachowski, Susan Chen, and Meredith Niles of the UC Davis Responding to Rapid Environmental Change Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship (REACH IGERT) program, a multidisciplinary group of graduate students who work on issues related to rapid environmental change.

A \$5 donation is requested. No host bar opens at 5:30pm. Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences is at 291 Country Club Drive, Incline Village.