

# Breathe Easy, Choose Fragrance Free.

April 2025

Many of the products we use every day contain fragrances. Fragrances in cleaning products, personal care products and essential oils can trigger asthma and cause other health impacts.

If you need help accessing or understanding this information, contact

[envision@vermont.gov](mailto:envision@vermont.gov).

## Fragrances



- Fragrances are often added to products to make them smell “good,” and air fresheners are used to cover up “bad” smells. **Clean air doesn’t have a smell.**
- Some fragrance ingredients are toxic and can harm health.
- In the United States, product labels do not need to list fragrance ingredients.
- Even products labeled as unscented can have added chemicals. “Unscented” usually means a chemical was added to cover up the product’s unpleasant smell.
- Some people may be allergic or more sensitive to fragrances than others. Avoid using fragrances in shared spaces like classrooms and offices.

## Essential Oils



- Essential oils are a type of fragrance. They are highly concentrated and can be made from plants or synthetic materials.
- Breathing in essential oils can trigger asthma and may disrupt hormones, harm reproduction and irritate skin.
- Essential oils are not regulated in the United States.



**HealthVermont.gov/CleanSafe**  
**802-863-7220**

 **VERMONT**  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

## Real life impacts on the health of students and school staff

“I have a student that has an allergy to fragrances. This allergy has been confirmed and diagnosed by a doctor and **is included in the student’s 504 plan**. When people wear or use fragrances in school, this student has allergic reactions including burning in the nose, eyes, mouth and throat, anxiety, itchy skin, heart racing and light headedness.” – **School Nurse in Caledonia and Essex Counties**

“A daycare provider was using an essential oil diffuser daily and one of the children was having frequent asthma exacerbations. Follow-up with health care providers found that the oils had settled in the child’s lung tissue causing **a specific type of pneumonia**.” – **School Nurse in Franklin County**

“We used to have an issue with teachers using essential oil diffusers and plug in air fresheners in their classrooms. The use of these products **produced allergic responses in some of our staff members**. It became clear that we needed to make a change. Our principal communicated that no outside products could be brought into the school.” – **School Nurse in Windham County**

## Take simple steps to breathe easier and improve indoor air quality.



- Choose fragrance-free products when you can.
- Establish a fragrance-free policy in your school or office.
- Instead of hiding smells with fragrance, take actions to improve air quality in your building. , Inspect and service your heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) equipment to make sure your building is getting enough fresh air.