



Why Fragrance Is Toxic

What is Fragrance Anyway:

- That's just it, we don't really know! Fragrance is a generic term that encompasses thousands of combinations of chemicals that create an odor. But here's the thing, individual chemicals are not required to be listed because they are considered to be proprietary or trade secret.
- Don't be fooled by the term fragrance free or unscented either. Many times a chemical combination is used to mask the scent of other chemicals.

Why Should I Care:

- When different independent studies were done on the actual chemicals used to create fragrance they found that some of the substances have not been assessed for safety in personal products. That means, some of the chemicals have been associated with hormone disruption (in men and women), allergic reactions, and have the ability to accumulate in human tissue.
- Why do I care as a cancer survivor? One of the toxic chemicals found in fragrance are *phthalates*. They are known endocrine disruptors; they mimic naturally occurring hormones in the body like estrogen and thyroid hormones, potentially producing an overstimulation. Something as an estrogen positive breast cancer survivor, I avoid at all costs.

Where is Fragrance Hidden:

- The top household items like candles, air fresheners, dryer sheets and personal care items are filled with fragrances, but don't worry my simple swaps are easy to do and will keep you healthy too.
 - **Candles** - *What's toxic about them:*
 - Two of the most common toxins found in fragrance paraffin candles are benzene and toluene, both are known carcinogens that can cause damage to the brain, lung and nervous system.
 - *What can I use instead:* If you plan on lighting up candles everyday, look for something that is made from beeswax or coconut wax. If you are looking for a particular smell from candles, make the switch to an essential oil diffuser.
 - **Air Fresheners** - *What's toxic about them:*
 - There has been lots of research done on air fresheners and their health side effects. Many of the air fresheners fragrances are made from chemicals known to be toxic such as phenols, ethanol, phthalates, xylene and formaldehyde. These have been linked to respiratory irritants, allergens, endocrine disruptors, and carcinogens.
 - Most air fresheners don't freshen the air at all, they cover up the odor with their artificial scent.
 - *What can I use instead:* Plants such as ferns, rubber trees, or peace lilies do a great job of purifying the air inside the house. If the air is stale in the house open windows and get air flowing or use the fan function of your heating system. Or if it's your sneakers that smell, try using [activated charcoal](#). The activated charcoal is a highly porous deodorizing material that absorbs and removes odors. The activated charcoal is a perfect chemical free alternative for smelly gym bags, shoe closets or shoes themselves.

- **Dryer Sheets - *What's toxic about them:***
 - A recent study was done by Anne Steinemann, PhD. She looked at what was coming out of the dryer vent and the results were alarming: 25 different volatile organic compounds, 7 hazardous air pollutants, 2 chemicals classified as carcinogens. These chemicals are linked to hormone disruptors, respiratory issues, skin issues, migraines, and asthma.
 - According to EcoWatch, dryer sheets often contain quaternary ammonium compounds, which can trigger asthma attacks. Acetone in the dryer sheets can trigger dizzy spells and headaches. Aside from that, up to 10 percent of a dryer sheet's weight could be comprised of fragrance chemicals.
 - *What can I use instead:* [Wool dryer balls](#) are a great alternative to dryer sheets. The wool balls bounce around in the dryer allowing more hot air to circulate through the clothes shortening the time the clothes are in the dryer. They help with static cling, fluff your laundry and reduce wrinkles. If you still looking for a scent on your clothes, add some essential oils to the dryer ball before you put it into the dryer. That's what I do!
- **Personal Care Items - *What's toxic about them:***
 - The chemicals that are used in personal care items have been directly linked with altered hormone levels, reproductive effects, and increased incidence of chronic diseases. Specifically the chemical called phthalates. As a breast cancer survivor it is extremely important to me to use products that do not contain any fragrance.
 - Phthalates have been banned in other countries, but not here in the US.
 - *What can I use instead:* Avoid any products that state the words fragrance on the ingredient list. Instead look for products that are 100% free of chemicals and preservatives. I love [Life On Mars](#)

[Beauty](#) products. They are plant-based made with plant essences of lavender, lemon, geranium and chamomile.