

# SCENT – SENSITIVE

## Judy Lewis

National Chairperson of Education and Health



**W**hat does “scent” mean? The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines scent as “a characteristic or particular odour”.

Where are scents found? Scents are everywhere. Scents are in shampoo and conditioners, hairsprays, deodorants, fragrances and perfumes, fabric softener sheets and liquid fabric softeners, laundry and dish detergents, oils and candles, cosmetics, industrial and household cleaners, soaps, colognes and aftershaves, air fresheners and deodorizers, diapers and some types of garbage bags.

Fragrance-free or unscented means that there have been no fragrances added to the product OR that a masking agent has been added in order to hide the scent.

What problems can scents cause? For people who are sensitive to scents symptoms can range from headaches, dizziness and lightheadedness, nausea, fatigue, weakness, insomnia, malaise, confusion, loss of appetite, depression, anxiety, numbness, upper respiratory symptoms, shortness of breath, difficulty with concentration, to skin irritation.

Allergic and asthmatic patients report that even the smallest amount of certain odours can trigger an attack and those with multiple chemical sensitivities may also be

affected. Symptoms will vary from mild irritation to being incapacitated and having to give up normal activities in order to avoid exposure.

The League loses valuable members, with the potential to become leaders, from meetings and activities when members are not “scent aware”. There have been reports of members who cannot attend League functions due to health-related issues from scents. How can members assist sister members to attend parish, diocesan, provincial and national meetings?

1. Be sensitive to members’ needs and conscious of the products we use on ourselves, our clothes and in cleaning.
2. Call the 1-800 numbers listed on the product label and ask if the product is fragrance-free or unscented or if a masking agent has been added to hide the scent.
3. Post signs stating members are sensitive to scents.
4. Never state a room or building is scent free because that is impossible to guarantee and the League and its members can be held legally liable for someone who gets ill from scents.

For more information contact the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety at [www.ccohs.ca](http://www.ccohs.ca). †

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

*Congratulations to the following members  
who have reached momentous milestones:*

Pearl Lutzo – 109 years on February 15, 2008

Flora Ziegler – 105 years on March 16, 2008

Anna Conway – 103 years on February 20, 2008

Theresa Cannon – 100 years on October 25, 2007

Yvonne Thomas – 100 years on February 23, 2008