

# Air Fresheners and your Home Air Quality



A fresh & clean smelling home is desired by all. This desire drives consumers to purchase air fresheners, sprays, and plug-ins regularly. What we must consider however, is how the air fresheners affect your health, your pets, and the home environment.

## What are Air Fresheners Composed of?

The type of air freshener you choose will determine the level of chemical impact it has on the indoor air. Scented items and fresheners that use flame, such as candles and incense, can add micro-particulates and formaldehyde to the air in addition to the unregulated fragrance chemicals. Spritzing or spray fresheners can introduce additional chemicals such as alcohols, propylene glycol, glycerin and many others to your air. A number of chemicals such as propane or butane, ethers, carbon dioxide, or Freons™ may also be present, acting as the propellant in aerosol cans or carrier liquid in standard pump spray bottles. Gel and potpourri style fresheners are the least intrusive and may also be perceived as less effective. Used in

moderation, scented air fresheners can be pleasant. Which should you choose to ensure the comfort of your family and guests?

## 5 questions to explore when purchasing an Air Freshener:

1. What ingredients are in the air freshener? Check labels but also know that certain toxins may not be listed such as the specific chemicals used to produce the fragrance itself.
2. Are there pregnant people in the house? Pregnant women, elderly, and children are more susceptible to adverse health effects that are a result of the added chemicals from the air fresheners.
3. Do people have allergies in the house? Those with allergies may experience adverse reactions or heightened symptoms with the use of aerosol/spray fresheners in

Continued on

2

addition to fresheners that add particulates to the air.

4. Is there a smell you are trying to mask? If there is a specific smell you can't seem to get rid of, you may want to have your home's indoor air quality tested. You may have an active mold growth problem.
5. How often will you use the freshener and can it be sealed while not in use? Moderate use of air fresheners should not have a lasting effect on the indoor air quality as long as they can be properly sealed and stored when not in use. Long term use of air fresheners can add significantly to the Total Volatile Organic Compounds in the air. In many

cases, additional units may be purchased as you become accustomed to the smell, compounding the ill effects.

**Alternative ways to keep you home smelling fresh:**

There are ways to freshen stale air in the home without harsh chemicals. Never underestimate the use of open windows when the weather permits. Keep up on cleaning duties such as the garbage, dishes, and vacuuming. Remember to use vent fans and allow for fresh air exchange during deep cleaning with harsh cleaners. Opt for the use of natural fresheners such as flowers and baking soda, and use indoor air quality purifiers with VOC trapping filters when needed. If you suspect a more serious odor problem such as mold growth, an indoor air quality test can help to determine the source.