

Accessible Healthcare for People with MCS

Accessing healthcare can be a challenge for many people, but for those living with Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS), even walking into a clinic or hospital can provoke severe symptoms. Scented cleaning products, air fresheners, or exposure to fragranced personal care products can cause serious symptoms like headaches, breathing difficulties, dizziness, or fatigue. For people with MCS, these environments are not just uncomfortable; they are also unsafe.

MCS is a recognized disability protected under the Canadian Human Rights Act, and that means people with MCS have the right to accessible, inclusive healthcare. However, many still face barriers, ranging from a lack of understanding of the condition to environmental triggers in doctors' offices and emergency care.

What Accessible Healthcare Should Look Like

Accessible care means that people with MCS can access medical services without risking and worsening their health. This includes having monitored scent-free policies in healthcare spaces, providing fragrance-free hand soaps and disinfectants, ensuring that staff are not wearing scented products, and that patients are educated on product choice.

Healthcare providers also need training on how to support patients with MCS. This includes understanding that symptoms on exposure are real, valid, and disabling. Just like other patients, people with MCS deserve to be believed, supported, and accommodated.

Advocating for Your Needs

Many people with MCS find that they have to advocate for themselves every step of the way. If you are requesting fragrance-free accommodations or trying to explain your



health needs, it is important to put everything in writing. This creates a record and shows that you took the initiative to request support. Whether it's an email to your doctor's office, a written note with your appointment booking, or a printed list of needs, written communication can help ensure your concerns are taken seriously, and protect your rights if accommodations are denied.

Tips for Accessing Care

- Call ahead to ask about scent-free policies and let staff know about your needs
- Ask if staff can prepare a room in advance without using scented products
- Request to wait outside or in a car until the provider is ready to see you
- Bring your mask if needed
- Ask for telehealth options when in-person care isn't safe
- Share educational materials about MCS to help raise awareness

You Have the Right to Safe Medical Care

Everyone deserves to receive care in a safe, welcoming environment. If you're a person living with MCS and have faced barriers in the healthcare system, you are not alone, and you are not without options. Organizations like [EHAC-ASEC](#) are working hard to raise awareness and push for more inclusive health policies across Canada.

Healthcare should help, not harm. By speaking up, documenting your needs, and staying informed about your rights, you're helping build a future where healthcare is truly accessible for all. To learn more about your healthcare rights and how to advocate for safer medical environments for people with MCS, visit [this page on Medical Aspects of Multiple Chemical Sensitivity \(MCS\)](#), from our Medical Event in January, 2024.