

## Discover Safer Seasonal Scents: Protecting Health While Celebrating the Season

As the holidays and colder months arrive, many homes fill with familiar seasonal scents — cinnamon candles, pine-scented sprays, and spiced air fresheners. While these fragrances may feel festive to some, for people living with **Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS)**, they can trigger debilitating symptoms, turning moments of comfort into sources of pain. Even for those without MCS, frequent exposure to synthetic fragrances can carry hidden risks.

This season, we invite you to rethink how you bring warmth and coziness into your space — and to discover safe, natural alternatives that protect health without losing the joy of seasonal traditions.

### Why Scented Products Can Be Harmful

#### 1. Synthetic chemicals linger indoors.

Scented candles, plug-in air fresheners, and seasonal sprays release volatile organic compounds (VOCs) into the air. These compounds can linger for hours, sticking to furniture, carpets, and clothing.

#### 2. Triggers for MCS symptoms.

For those with MCS, exposure can cause headaches, dizziness, nausea, brain fog, breathing difficulties, or skin reactions. Even “a little fragrance” can be as harmful as “a few steps” for someone who uses a wheelchair — small to one person, but a barrier to another’s health and well-being.

#### 3. Not just an MCS issue.

Studies show that synthetic fragrances can affect everyone, even at low levels, by contributing to poor indoor air quality, respiratory irritation, and hormone disruption. Children, seniors, and those with asthma are especially vulnerable.

## Safer Alternatives for Seasonal Cheer

The good news: you don't need chemical-laden products to enjoy seasonal comfort. Here are healthier, fragrance-free options:

- **Simmer pots:** A pot of water with sliced apples, oranges, cinnamon sticks, or cloves creates a warm, inviting aroma without synthetic chemicals.
- **Baked goods:** The natural scents of fresh cookies, bread, or muffins can fill a home with joy while being safe to breathe in.
- **Essential oil-free décor:** Stick to natural pinecones, branches, or citrus garlands for seasonal ambiance. (Note: essential oils can also be harmful for those with MCS and are best avoided.)
- **Beeswax or soy candles (unscented):** They offer a cozy glow without added fragrance. Look for “fragrance-free” specifically, as “unscented” products may still contain masking agents.
- **Fresh air:** If possible, open a window briefly to let in crisp seasonal air and refresh your space.