



May and May 12: Internationally Recognized for Multiple Chemical Sensitivity Awareness

Why May?

May is internationally recognized as Multiple Chemical Sensitivity Awareness Month, with May 12 recognized globally as Multiple Chemical Sensitivity Awareness Day. This long-standing observance is specific to MCS and reflects international efforts to improve recognition, accommodation, and inclusion for people living with this disability.

What is Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS)?

Multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS) is a recognized disability in Canada that can substantially limit major life activities, including breathing, mobility, access to housing, employment, healthcare, education, and public services. People with MCS experience adverse health effects when exposed to volatile organic compounds (VOCs) found in perfumes, fragranced products, cleaning agents, pesticides, building materials, and other chemical emissions commonly present in indoor and outdoor environments. Accommodation for this disability is well established and includes the implementation of fragrance-free policies; the use of lowest-VOC-emission, least-toxic products for all uses and purposes; and preventive, non-chemical approaches to building and land management that reduce the need for chemical interventions.

Statistics Canada has collected national data on MCS since 2000. Over a 20-year period, prevalence more than doubled to **over 1.13 million Canadians (1 in 34), diagnosed with MCS (CCHS, 2020)**, confirming its public-health significance.

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Why recognition matters

Across Canada, municipalities are taking concrete steps to include multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS) within accessibility and inclusion frameworks, including the implementation of fragrance-free and lowest VOC emission and least-toxic environments. These measures are essential to ensuring equal access to public spaces, services, and programs.

Scent-free and lowest VOC emission environments are widely recognized as essential accommodation measures that support participation, dignity, and equality for people living with MCS.

A municipal role

Municipal recognition of **MCS Awareness Month and Day** supports:

- accessibility and inclusion
- alignment with human-rights obligations
- healthier public environments
- informed policy and public awareness

Please align your municipality with existing law, evidence, and international recognition by recognizing Multiple Chemical Sensitivity Awareness Month in May and Multiple Chemical Sensitivity Awareness Day on May 12.

A joint initiative of the Environmental Health Association of Canada (EHAC-ASEC) and the Environmental Health Association of Québec (ASEQ-EHAQ).