

David Steinman's
The Doctors'
Prescription
for

Healthy Living

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THE NATURAL HOME

Air Fresheners vs. Incense

*"I worry that the man
who invented Muzak might
be thinking of inventing
something else."*

—Lily Tomlin

There is no question that for many households and other living and workspaces, use of fragrance and deodorizers is both necessary and practical. Fragrances are often required to mask odors—especially in situations where it is impractical or unwise to use open windows.

But the use of these modern commercial formulations—which we call Muzak for the Air—can also be detrimental to your health in more ways than you may have imagined. The purely physiological negative health effects of commercially available air fresheners are becoming of increasing concern to indoor air and health specialists—but these inventions of the Wonder Bread world have also done much more: they've deprived us of the therapeutic, spiritual powers of naturally gathered and crafted wild scents.

Scientists are increasingly aware of the fact that scents speak in a primitive, instinctual language with powerful healing, harmonizing properties. Smells retain an uncanny power to move us and to heal. Yet, modern culture all but ignores the fully dimensional therapeutic powers of natural scents.

Our medical and health advisory board has long recommended against use of aerosols in all forms because of the ability of their particles to deeply penetrate the body via the lungs where their particulates are deposited directly and carried into the bloodstream. These hazards are compounded by the fact that aerosol air fresheners also carry perfume mixtures, which may contain 600 or more chemicals—many with clear-cut toxic properties, even at low doses.

Illness in a Spray Can Aerosols and Air Fresheners

Use of aerosols and air fresheners may cause headaches and depression in women, and ear infections and diarrhea in young babies, warned Dr. Jean Golding, of the Bristol University Division of Child Health at a recent conference on indoor pollution in Edinburgh, UK. While scientists are not absolutely certain, they suspect that aerosols and air fresheners increase susceptibility to health problems by making the skin more permeable and weakening the body's immune defenses.

"A lot of people are unaware that in using air fresheners, you are filling the air with a lot of chemicals," says Dr. Golding. "The word 'air freshener' sounds like you are purifying things, when in fact you are not doing anything of the sort. Aerosols and air fresheners contain dozens of volatile organic compounds such as xylene, ketones and aldehydes, which can be toxic in high doses."

According to the Golding study:

- A survey of 14,000 pregnant women by epidemiologists at the University of Bristol in western England found that expectant mothers who used aerosols and air fresheners most days had 25 percent more headaches than women who used them less than once a week and a 19 percent increase in depression.

- Babies less than six months old who were frequently exposed to air fresheners had 30 percent more ear infections and a 22 percent increase in diarrhea.

Fragrances

Air fresheners also contain perfumes and fragrances. Once, fragrances did not pose the same degree of hazard that they do today. For thousands of years herbs, flowers, and animals such as Asian musk deer, beaver, and sperm whale have been sources of fragrances. However, expanding consumer demand and scarcity of these resources—coupled with advanced technology—led to a whole new area of synthetic fragrances, and today some 95 percent of the mix in most fragrances is made from synthetic chemicals. Many of the perfumes used in air fresheners contain mixtures of 600 or more raw materials and synthetic chemicals, few tested for their safety.

A recent government report targeted fragrances as one of the six categories of chemicals that should be given highest priority for neurotoxicity testing—along with insecticides, heavy metals, solvents, food additives, and air pollutants. In fact, some 84 percent of the ingredients used in fragrances have never been tested for human toxicity, or tested only minimally. Meanwhile, the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health reports that 884 toxic substances were identified in a list of 2,983 chemicals used in the fragrance industry as capable of causing breathing difficulty, allergic reactions, multiple chemical sensitivities, and other serious maladies including neurotoxicity.

Recently, we used the Cornell University online material safety data sheet information service to review ingredients in commercially marketed air freshener and deodorizer products. Among our findings, based on information released by manufacturers and standard industry toxicology texts:

AIR FRESHENER/DEODORIZER	CONTAINS	COMMENTS
Lysol Disinfectant Spray	2-phenylphenol	a severe eye and skin irritant, which has been demonstrated to have mutagenic properties
Glade Carpet & Room Deodorizer	sodium aluminosilicate	may be inhaled, adding to the body's burden of aluminum, a potentially neurotoxic metal
Citrus Fresh Dry Spray Air Freshener	1,1,1-trichlorethane	linked with neurotoxicity and heart arrhythmias
Time Mist Air Freshener with odor counteractants	polyoxyethylene nonylphenol	may be contaminated with the highly volatile carcinogen 1,4-dioxane

DID YOU KNOW?

Mothballs/Urinal Deodorizers Cause Cancer

Those foul smelling mothballs in your cupboard and deodorizers used in men's room urinals do more than smell nasty. They may cause cancer. The National Toxicology Program says that recently completed experiments provide "clear evidence" that naphthalene, the active ingredient in these products, causes respiratory tract cancers, including those of the nose. Try cedar-based products or natural incense instead.

The Incense Alternative

Incense combines the practical with the spiritual. It is able to deliver disinfectant benefits, as well promote harmony and provide health and emotional benefits. Incense can be used for room air freshening as an alternative to chemical air fresheners, as a mood-enhancing background fragrance, or as a meditation aid.

In the ancient Indian health system of Ayurveda, incense is used to prevent infection, purify the environment, restore harmony, stimulate *prana*, the vital force, and increase our capacity for goodness, or *sattva*.

One recent study examined whether incense could help with air sterilization in a hospital ward. In this study, incense's effect was compared with routine air sterilization methods such as ultraviolet radiation, formaldehyde, and other common methods. Bacterial cultures of the air in the wards indicated that incense "not only had the same effect as routine methods in air sterilization but also had no irritation to the patients."

How to Use

According to Ayurvedic pharmacology, the intrinsic qualities of flowers and other herbs allow for the selection of precise single or compound remedies to bring harmony to each individual. For example, all-natural **Auroshikha™ True to Nature® Incense Sticks**, the brand we recommend for their high quality, provides a range of more than 30 scents, all taken directly from nature.

Some fragrances, such as **lavender**, are useful for stress reduction. Use **frankincense** for contemplation, high spirituality and writing, deep internalization, and meditation. **Sandalwood** is for purifying your space and to help remove unwanted thoughts. Use **rose** to evoke the feelings of love and gratitude. **Geranium** can uplift the spirit and invigorate the mind.

Shopping for Quality Incense

We recommend Auroshikha™ True to Nature® incense. While there are many excel-

lent brands, Auroshikha incense is among the best. It is made using a natural bamboo stick onto which a paste made of jeegat (a natural bark), sandalwood powder and charcoal is then hand-rolled. The naturally sourced fragrance materials, after being carefully blended to achieve the right note, are then either mixed into the paste for the masala fragrances, or are impregnated into the paste through a hand-dipping process. It is important to note that Auroshikha uses no glue in its incense paste, and no cow dung, making it different in this regard than many incense varieties from around the world.

Auroshikha has had its products tested by an independent testing laboratory in India, and another in Europe, to ensure that they do not contain any heavy metals and are certified non-toxic. No other incense manufacturer we know of goes to this length to ensure the safety of its product.

How to Obtain

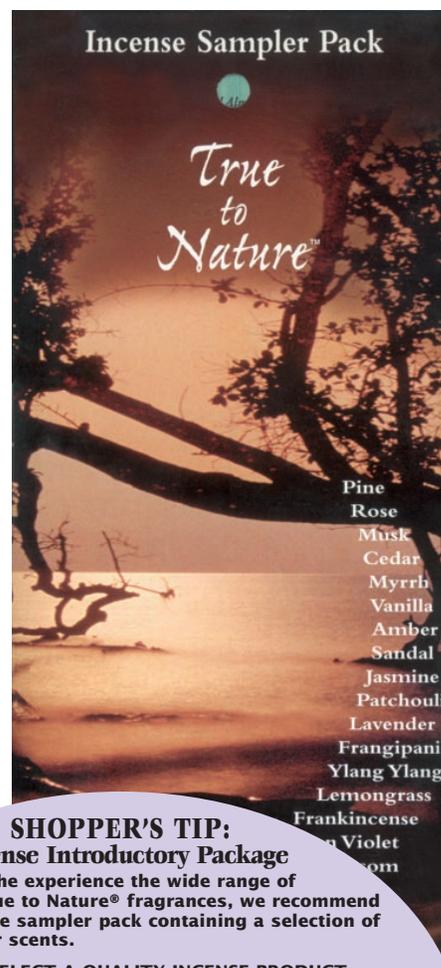
Auroshikha True to Nature Incense Sticks are imported in North America by Auroma International, a well-known national distributor and manufacturer of quality natural health products. They are available at natural health retailers nationwide, as well as

metaphysical book stores. The company prefers to support its retailers so, if your store doesn't have Auroshikha True to Nature Incense Sticks and you want them, have your retailer call Auroma International at (262) 889 8569 or E-mail to auroma@lotuspress.com (website: www.auromaintl.com) to order the product for you. It's a safe and healthy product to bring into your home for added freshness, harmony and health. ❖

References available at www.freedompressonline.com

Orders and Information

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SHOPPER'S TIP: Incense Introductory Package

In order to experience the wide range of Auroshikha True to Nature® fragrances, we recommend their 18-fragrance sampler pack containing a selection of their most popular scents.

HOW TO SELECT A QUALITY INCENSE PRODUCT

The preferred methods of preparation for incense are the masala method or hand-dipping of natural source fragrances as embodied in Auroshikha™ True to Nature® Incense Sticks. With these traditional methods, you can be sure that your incense provides a truly natural fragrance without chemical overtones. Natural incense prepared in the traditional methods:

- Contains natural fragrances based on herbs, flowers, fragrant woods and essential oils.
- Contains nontoxic ingredients, no glue or dung used in incense paste.
- Has been traditionally prepared, hand rolled, never mass produced.
- Will avoid excess smoke.
- Provide aromatherapy quality fragrances

The Doctors' Prescription

Daily use of natural incense promotes longevity, harmonizes the psychophysical constitution, and enhances mental focus. If incense is to be used in the area of children, Auroshikha True to Nature® is to be preferred over aerosol air fresheners and less pure brands of incense, since it produces extremely low amounts of smoke or other products of combustion.