

Safer Choice Label – Fragrance-Free

EPA recognizes that consumers, institutional purchasers and product manufacturers care about the use of fragrances in cleaning, personal care and other products. At the same time, we know that many fragrance materials may be associated with sensitization and allergenic responses and lack toxicological data. Health and environmental stakeholders have expressed the need for products that are certified to be fragrance-free products for individuals with fragrance allergies or sensitization concerns. In response to these needs, EPA developed an option for a fragrance-free label that would allow purchasers to identify fragrance-free products and know that the claim has been verified by a trusted source.

The fragrance-free certification is a companion to the Safer Choice label. If a product qualifies for the Safer Choice label and does not use any fragrance materials, the program will allow the manufacturer to add a “fragrance-free” notation to the Safer Choice label. Note that the term “fragrance” refers to a formulated product that contains multiple scent and other chemicals (e.g., carriers, stabilizers and preservatives), while “fragrance materials” are solely the scent and masking components in the fragrance.

(As a point of clarification, in the world of non-fragranced products, two descriptive terms are commonly used on labels: “Unscented” and “Fragrance-free.” Unscented generally means that, while fragrance materials are not used to impart a scent, a product may contain chemicals that neutralize or mask the odors of other ingredients. Fragrance-free means that neither fragrance materials nor masking scents are used in the product. EPA is using the broader “fragrance-free” designation with its Safer Choice label to help ensure that consumers and purchasers seeking to avoid exposure to fragrance chemicals can identify and select such products.)

To qualify for the fragrance-free label, a product must first meet all requirements in the Safer Choice Standard and safer ingredient criteria. EPA will review the product ingredients to ensure that the product contains no fragrance materials. The fragrance-free certification will mean that: 1) the product only contains ingredients on or eligible for the Safer Chemical Ingredients List (SCIL)—the program’s list of ingredients that meet our safer chemical criteria and are generally acceptable for use in Safer Choice labeled products—and 2) the product does not contain chemicals on the International Fragrances Association (IFRA) Transparency List of fragrance chemicals intended to impart or mask a scent. Product manufacturers and fragrance professionals regard the IFRA Transparency List as the comprehensive list of materials used by perfumers and the fragrance industry.

It is important to note that products that qualify for the Safer Choice fragrance-free certification may still have an odor and not be on the IFRA Transparency List. Some product ingredients, such as surfactants or solvents, carry an odor. Only chemicals recognized as having dual functionality—e.g., that are intentionally used as a solvent and/or as a fragrance—would be ineligible for use in products seeking the fragrance-free certification. EPA will work with manufacturers on a case-by-case basis to determine whether a chemical has “dual functionality.”