

# VOGUE

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**FASHION'S  
BRIT PACK**

The young  
designers

**JUMPSUITS:  
DARE  
TO WEAR  
THEM**

the environment. Anti-scent campaigners asserted that this was equal to the hazards of tobacco and pesticides, and cited a syndrome called Multiple Chemical Sensitivity.

A syndrome I hadn't heard about? Too good to be true? Turns out, it was. Few doctors in the US and Canada recognise Multiple Chemical Sensitivity as a real disease.

Meanwhile, the EU is taking matters more seriously. There are plans to limit the use of fragrance in products, as it has been found to be the most common ingredient that causes an adverse reaction. Legislation was introduced last summer to force manufacturers of chemical products (beauty companies included) to register and declare (and eventually reduce) the chemicals they use, in the interests of health and the environment.

But given that my aromaphobia couldn't wait for the new rules to take effect, I searched out as many fragrance-free products as possible. Apart from looking for the words "fragrance free" on the label, I also checked the ingredients list at the back of the bottles for the word "parfum", as there are 26 fragrance materials that are potential allergens used in beauty products listed under this name, and I was determined to avoid them.

At my local chemist, there was little to choose from. The one unscented shampoo, Shiny Paw, was for dogs. I moved on.

I discovered that the alternative beauty brand Jäsön, sold at health-food stores in the organic-products department, makes an entire fragrance-free range for customers who are allergic to (or worried about) scent. At first, while washing my hair with their shampoo, it felt as if something was wrong. I'm so accustomed to having a fruity aroma, it seemed as though I was cleansing my hair with air. But the lack of a fragrance lingering on my hair afterwards was liberating.

## Asking a hairdresser to use fragrance-free products is like asking a chef to use Spam

case a customer might not like the scent of their other body moisturisers.

I like using oils, and I thought it would be virtually impossible to find any that are fragrance-free, but Aveda has an entire scent-free line of skin, hair and body care, including an oil. Neal's Yard has a similar range called Baseline. The idea is that you can customise products by infusing the lotions, oils and bath gels with an essence of your choice, but they also work well without it. The products have a vague scent of the almond oil, wheatgerm and soya oil that they're made from, but I don't mind it. I prefer this to some so-called fragrance-free products that contain a masking scent to cover the unpleasant odour of the raw materials.

The Gorgeous skincare therapy range's fragrance-free line (it also has exactly the same formulations with a choice of two other scents considered to be the most universally appealing – rose or lemon) has no added fragrance to cover up a natural aroma that comes from

To my surprise, once I started looking, an entire world of scent-free living opened up. After the initial adjustment, I now can't believe how used to artificial scents I had become.

Deodorant, for instance. The smell of our own bodies has been drilled into our psyche as unacceptable. But is smelling like baby powder that much more desirable? I had assumed an unscented deodorant was out of the question. But it wasn't. Jäsön accomplished the impossible: I left the house confident I wouldn't stink. At first, I couldn't figure out what that unfamiliar smell was. Then it hit me: me.

In my quest for fragrance-free living, I learnt that finding unscented products was really not that difficult. Perhaps the most trenchant discovery I made is this: living without scents means that natural ones are more noticeable. When the senses are not congested with artificial smells, the real smell of the human body can emerge. This might not always be a good thing, but covering it up with vanilla and patchouli doesn't help. ■

## FRAGRANCE-FREE FAVOURITES

