

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 18, 2020

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New Publication Shows Air Fresheners May Help Mitigate Harm Caused by Indoor Malodors

Washington D.C. – The Household & Commercial Products Association (HCPA) released the following statement today about the importance of air fresheners after a newly published review article revealed several negative psychological, physical, social, and economic effects associated with indoor malodors, such as stale indoor air and bad smells.

[“The Impact of Indoor Malodor: Historical Perspective, Modern Challenges, Negative Effects, and Approaches for Mitigation,”](#) was published in *Atmosphere*, an international peer-review journal, for a special issue about indoor air quality in January 2020. Published studies on harm caused by indoor malodor are scattered across scientific and technical disciplines, ranging from psychology to economics. However, this is the first time the potential harms caused by indoor malodors have been summarized in one publication. The research confirms that malodors aren’t just an annoyance—they can have serious impacts on human health, behavior, and quality of life. For this reason, mitigating and eliminating malodor should be a matter of public health.

Exposure to indoor malodors can make people feel depressed, stressed, aggressive, confused, and lethargic, as well as experience nausea, headache, loss of appetite and sleep disorders, and irritation of the eyes, nose or throat. Additionally, these smells can threaten social relationships and cause economic harm. Malodors are socially undesirable and can influence a person’s attractiveness. The property value of a home or commercial building can decrease if it’s in close proximity to industries that emit odors, hotels can lose business if they don’t maintain proper air quality, and malodors can decrease certain cognitive functions, impacting worker productivity. In fact, research estimates that improvements to air quality in office buildings can provide a potential annual gain of \$20 billion.

One way to prevent the negative impacts of indoor malodors is by using household consumer products designed to eliminate these smells. Air fresheners are one of the most popular and affordable options for malodor removal, and data shows that almost 80 percent of U.S. consumers have purchased an air freshener for their home.

Certain air fresheners don’t just mask the smell of malodors with pleasant fragrances; they actually capture or alter the molecular structure of odor molecules for true odor-elimination. Cyclodextrin is an odor-eliminating ingredient made from corn starch that can trap odor molecules so they can’t travel through a house, and it is highly effective in removing smoke and kitchen odors. Spray air freshening products may also utilize pH buffers, like the citric acid found in lemons, to neutralize acid or basic kitchen, pet, or body odors and convert them to non-odorous molecules.

The pleasant fragrances found in air fresheners can provide additional benefits, including positive impacts on mood, stress reduction, and improved memory and sleep. Certain scents can even improve physical or cognitive performance. For example, lavender has been shown to support relaxation and peppermint can activate the brain and invigorate the mind.

While eliminating the source of malodors is the best way to prevent harm, it is not always possible to replace household items, like aged carpeting, or move to a new home. Air fresheners designed to eliminate malodors can provide a widely affordable solution to mitigating the harms of malodor discussed in this publication.

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About HCPA

The Household & Commercial Products Association (HCPA) is the premier trade association representing companies that manufacture and sell \$180 billion annually of trusted and familiar products used for cleaning, protecting, maintaining, and disinfecting homes and commercial environments. HCPA member companies employ 200,000 people in the U.S. whose work helps consumers and workers to create cleaner, healthier and more productive lives.