

Module 33 – Pillar Two: Personal Care

How to Safely Stop Armpit Odor



I'm spraying magnesium oil and holding Tom's of Maine, my two deodorant choices.

You've probably heard rumors that most underarm deodorants and antiperspirants are harmful in one way or another.

Yet, like so many other things, the general population figures they can't be all that bad. After all, everybody uses them! The government lets them be sold. No one has dropped dead holding a stick of deodorant to their armpit!

The truth is that most underarm deodorants contain compounds that interfere with the way your body is supposed to work and can block lymphatic tissue from doing its job. In a minute I'll share with you evidence correlating breast cancer with underarm deodorant and antiperspirants when applied so close to the breast.

Using safer alternatives (that work just as well or better) and reducing the cause of underarm odor will help prevent problems down the road – and even help you feel better today.

What's the Problem With Underarm Deodorants?

Issues vary from product to product. Some are worse. Some are better. Of course, there are a few brands that are quite safe and I'll talk about those later on. However, most supermarkets and pharmacies don't carry them. You have to seek them out online or in health food stores.

There are also some very inexpensive "homemade" alternatives. And, of course, just reducing the need for any kind of deodorant in the first place is the wisest and easiest move.

But before I show you what most deodorants and antiperspirants contain, I want to explain why our armpits have a distinctive odor in the first place.

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Why Underarms Smell

Most of us don't know why our armpits sometimes emit toxic fumes. And for that matter we don't know why we grow hair there either. (It's not for protection from the sun.)

Many believe that we secrete these nasty smells from our armpit skin. But we can also excrete toxins from all over our body. Let's figure this out. First of all, does your sweat smell? Sniff the skin of your forearm or your leg next time you break a total body sweat. If it doesn't smell, then neither should the sweat from your armpits.

Here's why the armpits are different. Our armpits are warm, dark places. This alone leads to sweating. The sweat, however, gets trapped there, providing moisture for bacteria to grow. And it's the bacteria that cause bad odors.

Bacteria need only a few things to really thrive. They need food, which the surface of your body provides in abundance via dead skin, hair cells and nutrients secreted by sweat. Bacteria also need warmth. Again, your armpit is one of the warmest places on the surface of your body. And they need oxygen. While your armpit may not be the most ideal place to get oxygen – there's still enough for microscopic bacteria. And lastly, they need moisture. Sweat takes care of that.

So your armpit becomes the perfect home for microscopic bacteria to flourish providing all the comforts of a microbe's dream home: food, water, heat and oxygen.

In return for you being so hospitable with your underarm food court of sweat, dead skin cells and hair cells – bacteria excrete some nasty smelling acids. And those acids are the origin of most body odor.

Deodorant and Antiperspirant Ingredients Triclosan & Chloroform

Now for the nasty stuff we use to try and kill those odor-causing bacteria. Triclosan is commonly used in many deodorants for its antibacterial properties. It has received a high danger score by the Environmental Working Group. In August 2009 the Canadian Medical Association asked the Canadian government to ban the use of triclosan because it can result in the formation of chloroform. The EPA classifies chloroform as a probable known carcinogen.¹

A 2006 study on bullfrogs demonstrated that triclosan can interfere with thyroid function and may be one of the reasons for the epidemic of low thyroid (hypothyroidism) in modern countries.²

It's now a U.S. law that products must state whether they contain triclosan due to the concerns over its effects on human tissue. So, it's now on labels and you may read the label, but that does little good because there are no programs to educate you about this potentially harmful ingredient and that it's best to avoid it.

Fragrances

Fragrances are commonly used in most deodorants probably as a way to cover up bad smells. Fragrances are dangerous chemicals that have never undergone proper safety testing for use on humans. Since they are not ingested, they are considered safe! But they are absorbed through the skin of your underarms into your bloodstream as if they were

taken in your morning tea. Scientific evidence shows they disrupt the balance of hormones in the body and can even cause cancer.^{3,4}

Aluminum Salts

Aluminum compounds are used in antiperspirants to block the natural process of sweating. They combine with sweat to form a gel that clogs up your sweat pores. Clogged pores equals no sweat. No sweat. No moisture for bacteria. No odor. Ingenious but exceedingly dangerous.

Think about it. Your body was designed to sweat. Sweating is crucial to maintaining a proper body temperature. More importantly, sweating is your body's chief means of excreting toxins. If the toxins can't get out they back up and can cause all sorts of problems like fibromyalgia, fluid retention and allergies.

And some of that aluminum finds its way into your bloodstream. We know this because it actually shows up in people's urine after applying underarm deodorant. But some of that aluminum may also pass into the brain and contribute to Alzheimer's, DNA damage and general mental decline.

A 2007 study at Keele University found high concentrations of aluminum in the breasts of breast cancer patients. The highest levels were found nearest the underarm.⁵ While further research is needed to prove or disprove the association between aluminum and cancer – the evidence (along with common sense) does suggest that applying neurotoxins in your armpits adjacent to your breasts is not a good idea.

Parabens

Parabens – chemicals typically used as preservatives and antibacterials – are also used in most deodorants.

In 2004, Dr. Philippa Darbre, an oncology specialist at the University of Reading, found evidence of parabens in breast cancer tumours. Parabens mimic estrogen – which has been linked to breast cancer.

“But A Little Can't Hurt”

Now, you may think that just a little bit of these chemicals will do no harm. You're right. But people don't use just a little. They use it every day. Sometimes several times a day. They go through container after container of underarm deodorant and antiperspirant. The chemicals build up over the years. They are absorbed into the skin, the breasts, the bloodstream, the brain. And that's not the only chemical people use, so the accumulation of many products is what I'm trying to warn you about in my *Future Health Now!* series.

Plus, with antiperspirants, the sweating process is blocked. Toxins back up. They sink back into the bloodstream.

Year after year, you're preventing your body from getting rid of toxins all the while sending in new ones.

It's really insane that it's gone on this long. Human beings got on fine for thousands of years without these modern concoctions.

OK, yes, they smelled and you don't want to. But those were also the times when soap was at a premium and people didn't have showers or unlimited hot water.

I'm not suggesting you go around with smelly armpits, move out to wilderness and beat your chest. There are safe alternatives. But first, let me show you how to reduce the amount of bacteria living under your arms – so you don't smell so much in the first place.

Avoid Alkaline Soap

The first way to prevent your underarms from emitting odors that clear the room is to reduce the amount of bacteria roaming around.

You can't do anything about the food, oxygen, warmth and moisture they find in your armpit without affecting your own health. But there's another quality bacteria love about most people's armpits that I haven't mentioned. It is actually the source of most of the problem. It's a high pH level. Yes, most people's armpits are alkaline. And that's not natural.

Yes, yes, alkaline on the inside is good. Your blood should be alkaline. Your food should be predominately alkaline. Even the tissue under your skin should be alkaline.

But not the surface. That's where your skin secretes a film known as the acid mantle. This acid kills bacteria so they cannot proliferate and damage the skin. It's your first barrier of defence against the little critters.

But if you use an alkaline-based soap (the most common type) you strip your skin of its acid mantle. This allows bacteria – especially in the armpit where it's moist and warm – to have a fiesta.

So the first step to stopping underarm odor is to stop using alkaline soap. Most people would do better using a lot less soap altogether. It's really only necessary for getting rid of deep-down dirt. The overuse of soap in our culture has mainly just benefited the soap companies.

You might want go without soap under your arms. Just wash them really well with plain old water and a facecloth. Obviously you want to keep your armpits clean. Wash away any bacteria. Clear out dead cells and hair cells that bacteria could feast on. But that really doesn't take all that much effort. Especially in a shower. Just blast the water into your armpits and wash them with a facecloth. You can also wash your armpits twice a day to keep them really clean.

And then look for some good acid-based soap. I'm happy with one I found on Vitacost.com. Nature's Plus Beauty Cleansing Bar with a pH of 4.5. You can look for others and let me know.

You may find that people pooh-pooh the idea that you need to use an acid pH soap at all. Once again, you have to do your own experiment and see how what works for you. one clue is that alkaline soaps tend to build up a white residue on the skin but the acid soaps don't.

Underarm Hair and Why It's There

Now, I've probably kept you on the edge of your seat wondering why we have hair under our armpits. As you might have guessed it's the body's way of helping with the bacterial problem. It's the same reason we have hair around our crotch.

The hair wicks away moisture so that the surface of the skin stays dry enough to discourage bacterial growth. So shaving your armpits may look more attractive and help

you compete in long-distance swimming – but just be aware that it does lead to more underarm odor. And, yes, it's the price I'm willing to pay!

Safe Commercial Alternatives

To the best of my knowledge, the following products are free of aluminum salts and parabens. But still make sure you read the list of ingredients. Company policies can change overnight. Also, ingredients may vary from country to country.

1. Dr. Hauschka Deodorant Fresh
2. Jason's Tea Tree Deodorant
3. Lush Aromacreme
4. Neal's Yard Remedies Lemon & Coriander Deodorant
5. Origin's No Offense
6. Tisserand Lavender & Lemon Deodorant
7. Weleda Wild Rose Deodorant
8. Yves Saint Laurant Paris Deodorant
9. Aubrey Organics
10. Tom's of Maine, but choose the newer ones without propylene glycol!

Safe Homemade Alternatives

Now you can save money and get the job done just as well with one or both of the following:

Magnesium Oil: Yes, I use it everywhere! The magnesium salts discourage bacterial growth. Just spray some under your arm. See Module 14 for *Maximizing Magnesium*. I recently had a reader tell me that she uses Milk of Magnesia as a deodorant! MoM is simply magnesium hydroxide...nothing to do with milk at all, and I told her it was a safe deodorant.

These two inexpensive alternatives will prevent armpit odor. If you are especially stinky or miss having flowery fragrances oozing up from underneath your arms – you can add essential oils mixed with a little water. Unlike chemical fragrances, essential oils will do no harm and will add a healing aromatherapy aspect to your health care program.

Coconut Oil: Plain coconut oil or adding a drop of lavender oil to it makes an awesome deodorant. Since coconut oil and lavender oil both have antibacterial and anti-fungal properties, you can't go wrong!

Aluminum-Free Baking Soda: Just fill a jar and keep it in the bathroom. Dip a wet finger, facecloth or cotton ball into the jar after you shower and apply it under your arms. You'll be surprised how well a little baking soda can absorb smells. It's also antibacterial. That's why we put boxes of it in the fridge!

Yes, baking soda is alkaline, and I'm going to be talking about preserving the acid mantle of your skin by not using alkaline soaps – but with this deodorant application, we're just talking about your armpits, not your whole body.

Most baking soda contains aluminum. So, make sure you buy "aluminum-free" baking soda. It will say on the package. You can purchase "aluminum-free" baking soda from a health food store or online.

Make It Happen

1. If you're currently using commercial deodorant with aluminum, triclosan or parabens, throw them out. Don't wait to finish the container. Don't even wait to finish reading this module. Throw them out. Let me hear that clunk in your garbage can!
2. Complain to the company for using chemicals that can be absorbed into your body.
3. Tell your friends and family about what you've read here.
4. Actually, before you start seeing friends and family again... you better buy one of the safe deodorants listed or use aluminum-free baking soda and/or magnesium oil (with a few drops of essential oil if you like).
5. Stop using soap or get a non-alkaline soap that doesn't strip your acid mantle.

Questions and Answers

Are ammonium alum deodorant crystals safe to use?

While ammonium alum has been used throughout history – particularly in the Far East and Mexico, it is an aluminum compound. Apparently it doesn't block sweat pores like the chemical counterparts. So that's a plus. But it's likely to still be absorbed by the body and we don't have any science to show that it doesn't contribute to cancer like other aluminum products.

Think of it this way, lead and mercury are “natural” and have been used for thousands years for many practical and even medical purposes – it doesn't mean they are safe. I'd avoid ammonium alum until proper studies have been conducted to prove its safety.

Until Next Week

Remember, if you don't think you can do EVERYTHING that I outline in the Future Health Now! modules, don't worry. I don't expect you to! Even if you just do 20% you'll probably see 80% of the results you are looking for.

Thanks for participating in Future Health Now! I hope you have been able to implement some of the strategies that I send each week. It will make all the difference in your future health if you do.

Coming Up In Module 34

In Module 34, let's *Give Your Colon A Psyllium Break* in our next Super Nutrient Pillar.

You'd be surprised how much energy the colon uses to push food through and do its job. Taking psyllium husks is a great way to give your colon a helping handful of gel to push your stool on through to the other side. Or to bind up a bowel that tends to be a bit loose.

Next week's Super Nutrient Pillar focuses on psyllium husks – which really isn't really a nutrient at all. In fact your body won't absorb any of it. But it does make everything work better in your gut, so it meets my criteria of a Super Nutrient.

I began taking psyllium to treat yeast overgrowth many years ago. I then started using it for traveling because of the inevitable slowing down of the colon. Next thing you know, we're going steady and I've been having a tablespoon every morning for the last few years.

I'll show you why psyllium is so valuable for digestive health (balancing both constipation and diarrhea), maintaining a normal weight and avoiding diabetes. Once you get hooked on it you'll wonder how you lived without it.

If you have any questions about this module email me at help@drcarolyndean.com



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