



How to Keep Your Underarms Fresh and Clean

Expert
Reviewed

Four Parts: [Keeping yourself Clean](#) [Deodorizing and Preventing Perspiration](#) [Removing Hair](#) [Fixing Underarm Problems](#)

If you are looking to keep your underarms fresh and clean, it doesn't have to be a hassle. Following a few simple guidelines and steps will keep you feeling great. You'll be ready to wear anything and go anywhere with confidence!

Part
1

Keeping yourself Clean

- 1 Shower daily.** The skin is your body's largest organ, and washing it frequently will help protect you and your underarms against harmful bacteria, odor, and illness.^{[1][2]} Use warm water and a mild soap.
- 2 Wear natural fibers.** Fabrics made of natural fibers (cotton, wool, silk, etc.) rather than synthetic ones (nylon, polyester, etc.) allow your skin to "breathe" easier.^[3] This means sweat will evaporate quicker, keeping moisture, bacteria, and odor under control. Make sure to wear clean clothing and wash your clothing frequently.
- 3 Be wary of certain foods that can make your sweat smell worse.**^[4] Foods with strong scents, such as garlic, onions, and spices like curry can contribute to body odor. Other products like coffee and tobacco may also be contributing factors. Limiting how much of these you eat or use will ultimately keep your underarms feeling and smelling fresh.
 - If you want to determine if a particular food is causing offensive body odor, eliminate it from your diet and see if the problem goes away. If it does not, try eliminating other foods one by one until you determine which one has the effect.
 - Chewing on leafy greens like parsley, or taking wheat grass supplements with meals may also reduce the problem, as these foods are natural deodorizers.

Part
2

Deodorizing and Preventing Perspiration

- 1 Apply a deodorant after showering to control underarm odor.**^[5] Deodorants typically work by masking body odor with various scents. One with baking soda as an ingredient will also help to neutralize odor.
- 2 Use an antiperspirant to control sweat and odor.** Antiperspirants work by blocking sweat glands. The lack of moisture from sweat will deter bacterial growth and resultant odor. This means that a antiperspirant will also control odor, while a deodorant alone may only mask it.^[6]
 - Most antiperspirants contain aluminum compounds. When you apply the deodorant, these compounds block your sweat glands, preventing perspiration. Some research, however, suggests that there may be a link between aluminum and issues like breast cancer and Alzheimer's.^[7] Other research draws more mixed conclusions.^{[8][9]} If you are concerned, talk with your doctor.
- 3 Try baking soda.** If you are looking for a more natural or additional preventive, try baking soda as a deodorant. Baking soda will neutralize odors, not simply cover them up. Take approximately an eighth of a teaspoon of baking soda in your hand, then add a few drops of water to make a paste. Once the baking soda is dissolved, simply apply lightly to your underarms.^[10]
- 4 Follow a recipe to make your own deodorant.** If you want to avoid any harsh chemicals in manufactured deodorants, there are numerous recipes available for making your own using natural ingredients, most of which are easily available.

- Try this easy recipe. Mix one part baking soda to one part cornstarch. Then add four parts coconut oil to each part of this baking soda/cornstarch mixture. If you want an additional scent, add a few drops of an essential oil, like tea tree, lavender, or violet. Store in a glass jar and apply as a deodorant.^[11]

**Part
3****Removing Hair**

- 1 Shave regularly.** This helps underarms dry more quickly, keeping odor down.^[12] Many also believe it improves appearance. You can choose an electric razor, a non-electric razor with disposable blades, or a disposable razor.
 - Begin by washing. Shave after showering and drying your underarms. The warmth will open the pores of your skin, making it somewhat easier to remove hair.
 - Apply shaving cream, if desired. Many people prefer to use a shaving cream to make the shaving process easier and to reduce irritation. Follow the directions your cream supplies, but generally speaking you will only need to apply a thin, even coat.
 - Unscented cream is best, because it lessens chances of irritation and allergic reaction. ^[13]
 - Carefully use the razor to remove hair from your underarms. Go slowly and carefully, as your underarms are curved and difficult to shave. You do not want to cut or nick your skin in the process. Shaving in the direction that the hair grows will reduce the chance of razor burn and ingrown hairs.
 - Use a mild astringent afterwards. Apply a mild astringent, such as witch hazel, after shaving to reduce irritation.
 - Exactly how often you will want to shave depends on how fast your hair grows, your personal preference, and other factors.
 - Replace your razors regularly. It's time to get a new one when you see an accumulation of waste in the razor. This waste can introduce bacteria to your pores and cause an infection.^[14]
- 2 Try a depilatory cream.** Depilatory or hair-removal creams keep hair away for several days to weeks. They work by dissolving hair from off of the skin so that it can be rinsed away easily.
 - Many people find such creams to be harsh and to have offensive odors. The strong chemicals used in these creams are potentially caustic to the skin and can cause irritation.^[15]
 - Carefully follow all directions provided with the cream. Due to the harshness of the chemicals, it is safer to leave the cream on for less than the lowest recommended time.^[16]
 - Always test a depilatory cream before a full use. Apply to only a very small portion of your skin, then wait 24 hours. If you do not have any allergic reactions like redness, swelling, or itching, then it is likely safe for use on your skin.^[17]
- 3 Wax if you want a more long-term solution.** Waxing is somewhat painful, and can leave skin irritated for a time. However, it will keep hair away longer than shaving will.^[18]
 - Hair should be neither too short nor too long for optimum waxing—about ¼ of an inch is a good estimate. Trim the hair before waxing if it is longer than that. ^[19]
 - Clean, exfoliate, and dry your underarms before waxing.
 - Using a quality cosmetic wax, apply a strip or thin layer in the opposite direction that your hair grows in. Remove according to the product directions.
 - Use a cooling moisturizer, aloe, or ice afterwards to ease the pain and irritation.
 - Waxing requires skill and can be painful and even dangerous, so you may want to have a professional take care of this. Be sure to go to a reputable and clean salon^[20]
- 4 Consider electrolysis if you want a permanent prevention of hair growth.** In the process of electrolysis, a thin needle is inserted in the skin near the hair follicles. A low-level electrical charge destroys the hair follicle so that the hair does not grow back.^[21] The process is slow and expensive, but results in permanent hair removal.^[22]

**Part
4****Fixing Underarm Problems**

- 1 Lighten underarms using simple remedies.** Darkening of underarm skin can have a number of causes,

including dead skin accumulation or a reaction to a deodorant. If you find this darkening disagreeable, you may want to lighten the skin. There are commercial skin lightening creams, but these are not well-regulated and may contain harsh chemicals.^[23] Luckily, there are natural ways of lightening the skin. Some of the simplest and most effective include:

- Try using honey as a simple and safe remedy that may help lighten skin. Apply raw honey over your armpits and leave it on for about 15 to 20 minutes. Then, rinse it away. You can also combine a ½ tablespoon of honey with a tablespoon of yogurt or ½ teaspoon of lemon juice to intensify the effects.^[24]
- Often, dead skin cells cause underarm skin to darken, so regular exfoliation can also help. Exfoliants can dry out and irritate the skin, so choose a mild one.

2 Change your deodorant if your underarms are irritated or bothersome. You may have an allergic reaction to a component of a deodorant if you notice persistent itching, redness, swelling, etc. on your underarms. Research has shown that a deodorant containing glycerol and sunflower seed oil can reduce irritation after shaving.^[25]

- If your deodorant does not seem to reduce underarm perspiration or odor, or if you have a reaction to it, talk to a medical professional about stronger or alternative products.^[26]

3 Consult a doctor if you have unusual or persistent symptoms. Sweating, hair growth, odor, and darkening of the skin are all minor issues that normally arise related to underarms. These can be safely taken care of using the steps above. However, if things are out of the ordinary, it could be a sign of something more serious that needs professional attention.

- If sweat smells fruity, it could be a sign of diabetes, while liver or kidney disease can cause sweat to smell like bleach.^[27] Consult a doctor if you notice an unusual smell or a marked change in smell.
- Darkening of the skin of the underarms can happen to anyone, but is found more often in people with insulin problems, pituitary problems, certain infections, and a range of other issues. Contact a physician if you are concerned or if the darkening arises with symptoms of another problem.

Community Q&A

Is it okay to use powder on armpits?

Jennifer Boidy,
R.N.

Using powder on your armpits may be an effective way to help you feel fresh and dry. It is best to avoid using a powder with talc in it as that ingredient has been linked to certain cancers. Choose a powder with cornstarch instead.

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Chat with this expert

I have dark underarms. I have when tried natural remedies and different deodorants, but it doesn't seem to help. What can I do?

Jennifer Boidy,
R.N.

You can try gentle exfoliation. One way is to rub gently with a wash cloth when washing your underarms. If the darkening is continuing despite natural remedies and exfoliation, consult with your doctor to rule out an underlying health issue and to discuss prescription strength skin brighteners.

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Chat with this expert

Why do my clothes have stains after waxing my armpits today?

wikiHow
Contributor

Were the stains blackish? If so, the wax you used probably rubbed off of your armpits when you sweated today. Try washing your armpits after waxing.

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What kind of deodorant should I use?

wikiHow
Contributor

This depends on your preference, so try out different deodorants until you find one that you like best. A good deodorant should mask the odor of your armpits while not irritating your skin.

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Things You'll Need

- Mild soap
- Shaving cream (unscented is best) and razor, or hair removal cream
- A mild astringent
- Deodorant
- Baking soda
- Honey, yogurt, lemon juice, potato, and/or cucumber

Sources and Citations

1. <http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/body/>
2. <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Body-odour/Pages/Treatment.aspx>
3. <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Body-odour/Pages/Treatment.aspx>

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