DEODORANTS VS ANTIPERSPIRANTS

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In our modern American Society, underarm odor is definitely unacceptable. Does it matter which product one should use? What are the differences? How do they work? Are they safe?

First of all, let us discuss the problem. What is sweat? Human bodies, in particular, skin contains millions of glands. Two of these glands produce sweat--eccrine glands and apocrine glands. The eccrine glands are located all over the body and their primary function is to control the body's temperature. The apocrine glands are concentrated in a few certain areas, notably the underarms and feet.

When we are nervous, stressed or active our sweat glands are stimulated to produce more sweat. As it evaporates, it absorbs heat from the body and cools the body. Sweat itself is odorless. The issue with odor centers around bacteria on the skin which thrives in hot, humid, elevated PH environments. The bacteria feed on dead skin and hair cells and sweat to produce 3-methyl-2-hexenoic acid (Wikipedia). This is the culprit that gives off the distinctive underarm odor.

This brings us to the topic of prevention of the offending odor. Of, course, daily showering or bathing and good diet are extremely important and should be the first steps taken. Most of us, though, are not content without a second layer of protection. There are two basic products that most of us utilize--deodorants or antiperspirants.

The FDA classifies deodorants as cosmetics, whereas, antiperspirants are classified as over the counter drugs (Wikipedia). Deodorants use alcohol, antiseptic substances such as boric acid or formaldehyde or anti-microbial compounds to kill the bacteria (darkside site). Fragrances or scents are added to cover up any smell. "Mum" was the first deodorant produced and patented in the late 1800's in Philadelphia, PA. The name of the inventor is unknown (Wikipedia).

Antiperspirants attempt to stop or reduce the flow of perspiration. The major ingredients that perform this function are aluminum salts or aluminum compounds. These ingredients react with the electrolytes in sweat to create a thin layer of gel that covers the sweat glands or plugs them to prevent perspiration (thefacts site). Antiperspirants also contain scents or fragrances.

There is controversy surrounding the issue of safety of antiperspirants. There are those that believe that aluminum is toxic when used every day. Thefactsabout.co.uk website states that aluminum is the third most abundant element in the earth and is found naturally in food, drinking water and some pharmaceuticals. It also states that the overwhelming mass of safety data doesn't indicate that there is a problem. This site also says that we don't excrete toxins through the sweat glands, only through the liver, kidneys and into the urine or feces. Finally, it states that a number of leading cancer researchers and the American Cancer Society have stated that antiperspirants are safe.

Others disagree. Wikipedia website states that those with chemical sensitivities may experience dermatitis or irritation. It is also stated that high doses of aluminum adversely affects the blood-brain barrier, capable of causing DNA damage. For all we really know, continued use of aluminum based products that plug sweat glands is unnatural. Who knows what the long term effects really are.

There are many studies available that propose a link between the aluminum and increased chance of breast cancer. However, according to Wikipedia and Mother Nature Network sites, the

American Cancer Society and the National Cancer Institute posit that they cannot find any correlation or evidence of harm. The FDA warns that people with renal disfunction that use antiperspirants may be at a high risk for disease and should check with their doctors before using antiperspirants. It seems to me that no matter where you look you can find evidence for and against the safety of aluminum based antiperspirants.

With all that being said, how is a person to know? I find it interesting that before a woman has a mammogram the first thing she is told to do is to use a wipe on the underarm area to remove the aluminum. We are not told why unless we ask. Hmmmm...

Why take a chance, is my motto. There are definite alternatives that do not contain aluminum. Some men's deodorants are free from aluminum, such as Mennen Speed Stick. Other natural product lines, such as Kiss My Face, Tom's of Maine, Dr. Hauschka Deodorant Fresh, Burt's Bees Herbal and Weleda's deodorant are also available (Mother Nature).

However, why not check with Young Living? Young Living produces two deodorants that are very effective, natural and aluminum free. One is AromaGuard Meadow Mist Deodorant which contains coconut oil, beeswax, vitamin E and pure essential oils like lemon and lavender. The second is AromaGuard Mountain Mint Deodorant which contains coconut oil, beeswax , vitamin E and is infused with lemon, rosemary and other pure essential oils. YLEO are, without doubt, outstanding, trustworthy products. To conclude, in a world full of chemical exposure, it makes sense to use a natural, safe, noncontroversial product--every little bit helps.

Sites used:

bbc.com
darkside.hubgages.com
the factsabout.co.uk
mnn.com
en.wikipedia.org
youngliving.com