

**Health and Wellness:**  
**Update to Underarm Protection and Long-Term Health**

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Something which seems as unpretentious as underarm protection has the potential to cause or exacerbate long-term problems ranging from breast cysts, breast cancer, Alzheimer's, as well as adversely affect the liver, kidneys, brain, cartilage and bone marrow. The jury is still out on causality of many illnesses including these. No doubt however that whenever harmful chemicals are applied to the body, they are absorbed into the skin. Daily usage of suspect chemicals over one's entire lifetime certainly warrants careful consideration.

Although not likely in the not too distant future, long overdue research will produce a much more informed public on this topic. In the meantime, if there is a chance that typical underarm protection is a factor in the development of even minor health problems, with the potential for more serious harm, it only makes sense that both women and men should take the preventive option to find the best choice as early as possible.

Some women prefer to apply deodorant the morning after shaving their underarms. Regardless of when a natural deodorant is applied, while crystal deodorant stones were once thought to be safe, such may not be the case any longer (see 2 below). Until the medical community decides whether even small quantities of aluminum are safe, avoidance is preferred.

To make an informed decision about safe and effective underarm protection, at the very least, add this topic to the list of items to discuss with your doctor on your next annual visit. Although it would be nice if all doctors were knowledgeable about this topic, don't get your hopes up too high since your physician may or may not be able to guide you on this issue. Remember that doctors are learning from their patients too.

When selecting a natural deodorant, try to choose one that contains as many of the following ingredients as possible: botanicals and baking soda so that odor is neutralized as well as essential oils and witch hazel (the latter also soothes skin) so that perspiration is evaporated. Mineral salt is another beneficial ingredient because it prevents bacteria growth. Basic deodorant powder recipes are available on the internet (see 3 and 4 below) which include baking soda, cornstarch and tea tree oil. Be aware that some websites condone the use of talc (a known carcinogen) which should be avoided completely. Tom's of Maine has several varieties from which to choose and has been personally effective.

Three of the most common pitfalls people encounter when switching to a natural deodorant are itchiness, redness and odor. Based on experience, some people keep an arsenal of natural deodorants at home and choose the one which they expect to need throughout the day. Give your body time to adjust which can vary from a few days to over a month. Multiple applications (the number of times you rub the deodorant to your underarm) might be needed for strenuous work or exercise. Try to use the least number of applications and increase the next day if needed, keeping in mind that the number of applications can range from 3-24. Consider a backup plan to prevent embarrassing situations (e.g., bring an extra deodorant with you in case you need to clean and reapply and/or have an extra change of clothes on hand).

Following are some of the websites used to write this article:

- 1) <http://www.livestrong.com/article/221426-comparison-of-natural-deodorants/>
- 2) <http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2010/02/16/aluminum-lurks-in-crystal-deodorants.aspx>
- 3) [http://www.thriftyfun.com/tf73810931.tip.html#post\\_feedback](http://www.thriftyfun.com/tf73810931.tip.html#post_feedback)
- 4) <http://www.passionatehomemaking.com/2010/02/homemade-all-natural-deodorant.html>
- 5) [http://www.answerbag.com/q\\_view/1916812](http://www.answerbag.com/q_view/1916812)
- 6) <http://scienceblog.com/community/older/2003/C/2003102.html>

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