

6 Ways Your Armpits Can Clue You In On Your Overall Health



Armpits aren't exactly sexy. There certainly aren't articles in fashion magazines giving you tips on how to accentuate them. The only attention they typically get is how to keep them from smelling so much or how to shave them to prevent firey razor burn. But as it happens, that could be a mistake because armpit health can actually tell you a lot about your overall wellbeing.

Details like their appearance, smell, and even how much you sweat, all matter in the overall story of your health. Of course, none of it is helpful unless you know what different armpit indicators actually mean, according to medical professionals, who are in the know. Keep reading for the low-down, so you know what armpit health clues are worth paying attention to—and which ones you can just ignore.

6 clues your armpits are giving you about your overall health

1. A red, itchy rash could be a sign of eczema

Simply what your armpits look like can be meaningful intel—especially if you experience any rashes. Howard Sobel, MD, a dermatologist and the founder of [Sobel Skin](#), says armpit rashes can happen for a few different reasons (other than [razor burn](#)). One is that the rash in question could be eczema. “Eczema is commonly found in folds of the body, like armpits,” he says. “This skin condition usually begins in childhood, but could definitely be a cause of a rash, especially during a flare-up.” Eczema typically is red and itchy and can crust over. If you notice this happening in the armpit area, it can tip you off to look other places, like behind your knees or elbows. If you experience this, it’s definitely worth seeing a dermatologist to get an expert’s take on treatment.

2. Rashes can also indicate an allergy

Dr. Sobel says another reason why rashes could occur is due to irritation from an ingredient in your deodorant, fragrance, body wash, or anything else coming directly into contact with your armpits. He says these types of rashes look similar to eczema (red and itchy), but they typically do not crust over and also don’t occur elsewhere on your body. If you switch up your beauty routine with anything new and then get an armpit rash, it’s a good indicator that something in your new product could be irritating your body or you might be potentially allergic.

3. Swelling, itching, and scaling could indicate a yeast infection

Crazy health tip: yeast infections don’t just occur in your vaginal area. Family practice doctor [Lisa Koche, MD](#), says they can happen under your arms, which could be a sign that your body is overproducing yeast. “Someone is more prone to yeast infections—of all types—if they have a lot of sugar in their diet,” she says. “If there is an overgrowth of yeast or fungus, swelling, itching, and scaling can occur under the arms and can worsen in hot weather or tight clothing,” says Dr. Sobel, adding that poor hygiene can also cause the body to grow fungus in the armpits.

4. Excessive sweating could be a sign of overactive neurological pathways

Besides appearance, how much you sweat is another armpit health clue. “Excessive sweating, known as hyperhidrosis, usually is not caused by an underlying medical condition and is caused by overactivity in the neurological pathways, but not anything to be concerned about,” Dr. Sobel says.

“Typically, if someone has [hyperhidrosis], they know because they’re sweating *a lot*,” adds Dr. Koche. Again, nothing to worry over because it can easily be treated if you see a doctor. Both MDs say Botox tends to be the go-to solution, but if you’re looking for a super-strong antiperspirant, reach for Dove Advanced Care Antiperspirant (\$3).

“Spicy foods, alcohol, and stress can also cause excessive sweating,” Dr. Koche says, so try to keep those in check and limit intake if you’re dealing with more sweat than usual.

5. A funky smell could be an indicator that your pH is off

Without deodorant, no one’s armpits smell like roses; Dr. Koche emphasizes that armpit odor is completely normal. At least most of the time. “[Overt armpit odor] happens when sweat comes in contact with bacteria on the skin. You can smell more if you have more bacteria,” she explains. Dr. Koche says this can happen due to an imbalance in pH levels, which can be caused by too much “bad” bacteria in the gut. If you’re smelling funky lately, it could be an indication that something could be off in your gut.

6. A change in smell could be a sign you’re dehydrated

Dr. Koche says dehydration can also cause armpit smell to become stronger. Often, she says, this is linked to excessive sweating during exercising or when it’s hot. It’s important to replenish the body with the water it loses through sweating. Dr. Koche also adds that a stronger smell could be because the shirt you’re wearing isn’t breathable enough, trapping sweat and odor in instead of letting it out.

See? Who knew armpit health was such a goldmine of info about your well-being. While all of this info can be helpful, it comes with a major, three-word caveat: See your doctor. Otherwise, you may end up lying in bed at night worrying about something that is actually NBD. And that would be, well, the pits.