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The short answer: If your daughters body odor smells like onions, its likely due to thioalcohols. These are pungent compounds produced when bacteria on the skin break down sweat. Genetics, diet (especially foods like garlic and onions), hormonal changes (even in young children), and even stress can contribute to this type of body odor. While often harmless, it can be a source of concern and embarrassment. Lets explore the various factors involved and what you can do about it.Understanding the Science Behind Onion-Like Body OdorThe key culprits in onion-like body odor are thioalcohols. These are organic compounds containing sulfur, and they have an incredibly potent smell, even in small amounts. Think of them as the tiny but mighty odor molecules! They are naturally produced by bacteria on our skin as they metabolize components of sweat.The Role of Sweat GlandsWe have two main types of sweat glands: eccrine and apocrine.Eccrine glands are found all over the body and produce a watery, odorless sweat that helps regulate body temperature.Apocrine glands are concentrated in areas like the armpits and groin. They produce a thicker, oily sweat that is initially odorless. However, when bacteria break down this sweat, it produces those characteristic body odor molecules, including thioalcohols.Bacteria: The Unseen ActorsThe bacteria living on your daughters skin are essential players. Different people have different bacterial compositions on their skin, and certain types of bacteria are more prone to producing thioalcohols than others. For instance, Staphylococcus hominis is known to produce 3-methyl-3-sulfanylhexan-1-ol (3M3SH), a thioalcohol associated with the smell of rotten onions or meat.The Impact of DietDiet plays a significant role. Certain foods, particularly those containing sulfur compounds, can contribute to an onion-like or garlic-like body odor. These foods include:Garlic: High in allicin, a sulfur-containing compound.Onions: Similar to garlic, onions contain sulfur compounds.Cruciferous Vegetables: Broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and Brussels sprouts contain sulfurous compounds that can be released through sweat.Eggs: Can contribute to sulfurous odors in some individuals.When these foods are digested, their sulfur compounds enter the bloodstream and can be excreted through sweat, leading to noticeable changes in body odor.Genetics and HormonesGenetics also plays a part in how many thioalcohols your body produces. If other family members have similar body odor, it suggests a genetic predisposition. Hormonal changes, even in children, can stimulate sweat glands and alter body odor. This is why some children may experience noticeable body odor even before the typical age of puberty.Stress and Body OdorStress can exacerbate body odor. When stressed, your body activates the apocrine glands, which produce sweat rich in proteins and fats the perfect food for odor-causing bacteria. Stress sweat also tends to be more concentrated, contributing to a stronger smell.What Can You Do About It? Practical SolutionsWhile you cant completely eliminate body odor, you can manage it effectively:Hygiene: Encourage regular showering with antibacterial soap, focusing on the armpits and groin area. Make sure to dry these areas thoroughly after showering.Antiperspirants: Use antiperspirants to reduce sweating. Deodorants mask the odor but dont stop sweat production. Some antiperspirants contain aluminum compounds that block sweat ducts.Dietary Changes: Limit or avoid foods known to contribute to body odor, such as garlic, onions, and cruciferous vegetables.Clothing: Wear breathable fabrics like cotton that allow sweat to evaporate. Change clothes daily, especially after physical activity.Hydration: Drinking plenty of water helps dilute sweat and can reduce odor.Stress Management: Teach your daughter healthy ways to manage stress, such as exercise, deep breathing, or mindfulness techniques.When to Seek Medical AdviceIn most cases, onion-like body odor is harmless and manageable with hygiene and lifestyle changes. However, consult a doctor if:The body odor is sudden and severe.It is accompanied by other symptoms, such as excessive sweating, skin irritation, or signs of early puberty.Dietary and hygiene changes dont improve the situation.You suspect an underlying medical condition, such as bromhidrosis or a metabolic disorder.Your child is under the age of 7 or 8 and exhibiting signs of puberty alongside the body odor. This could indicate precocious puberty, which needs medical evaluation.FAQs: Addressing Your Concerns About Body OdorWhy is my daughters body odor so strong?The intensity of body odor depends on several factors, including the amount of sweat produced, the type and amount of bacteria on the skin, diet, genetics, and hormones. A combination of these factors can lead to particularly strong body odor.Is it normal for young children to have body odor?Its not uncommon for younger kids to have armpit smells. Its important to note that even before reaching puberty, hormonal fluctuations can start to occur. As long as your child doesnt have any other signs of puberty, and theyre under the age of eight, its generally not a cause for concern.Could my daughter have bromhidrosis?Bromhidrosis is a condition characterized by abnormally offensive body odor. If the odor is unusually pungent and persistent despite good hygiene, bromhidrosis may be the cause. A doctor can diagnose bromhidrosis and recommend appropriate treatment.What role do genetics play in body odor?Genetics influence the amount of sweat you produce, the composition of your sweat, and the types of bacteria that live on your skin. If family members have similar body odor, genetics are likely playing a role.What foods can make body odor worse?Foods like garlic, onions, cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage), and eggs can contribute to body odor. These foods contain sulfur compounds that are excreted through sweat.Can stress really affect body odor?Yes, stress can worsen body odor. Stress activates apocrine glands, producing sweat rich in proteins and fats that bacteria feed on, leading to stronger odors.How can I help my daughter feel less self-conscious about her body odor?Open communication is key. Educate your daughter about the causes of body odor and emphasize that its a normal part of life. Help her establish a good hygiene routine and encourage her to talk about her feelings. If necessary, consult a therapist or counselor to help her cope with any anxiety or self-consciousness.Are there any natural remedies for body odor?Some people find natural remedies helpful, such as:Apple Cider Vinegar: Applied to the armpits to help balance skin pH.Tea Tree Oil: An antibacterial essential oil that can reduce odor-causing bacteria.Baking Soda: Can absorb moisture and neutralize odors when applied to the armpits.Always do a patch test before using any new product on your daughters skin to check for allergies or sensitivities.Can certain medications cause body odor?Yes, certain medications can alter body odor as a side effect. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about potential side effects of any medications your daughter is taking.Is there a link between kidney problems and body odor?Yes, kidney disease can sometimes cause a change in body odor, often described as an ammonia-like smell. If you suspect kidney problems, consult a doctor for evaluation.Does everyones armpits smell like onions?No, not everyones armpits smell like onions. The specific odor depends on individual factors like genetics, diet, hygiene, and the bacterial composition on the skin. However, the onion armpit smell is a very common type of body odor!Why does my 11 year old daughter smell down there?If a girl has an infection like bacterial vaginosis, she may notice a fishy smell. But even then, its unlikely that people around her will notice it. Girls who notice an unusual smell should see a doctor just in case they have an infection.Why does my daughter smell like garlic?Eating Pungent Foods. Digestion actually starts with that first bite of food, and whatever your child eats begins breaking down in their mouth, which can cause an unpleasant smell. Sulfur-producing foods like garlic and onions are especially notorious for causing bad breath in kids (and adults).What are the early warning signs of kidney?The top 7 signs of kidney disease are feeling nauseated, feeling more tired than usual, having cramping, aching, and swollen, your urine has changed, youre less hungry, you have other chronic conditions, and you arent focusing well.What foods causes onion body odor?The answer is garlic, onions can change the smell of sweat. The change in body odor is often sudden and uncomfortable for many people. According to Columbia University Health Services, foods like garlic and onions contribute to body odor.Disclaimer: This information is for general knowledge and informational purposes only, and does not constitute medical advice. It is essential to consult with a qualified healthcare professional for any health concerns or before making any decisions related to your health or treatment.To learn more about environmental factors affecting health, check out The Environmental Literacy Council at enviroliteracy.org. Onion-smelling sweat is totally normal, and there can be many causes. But, it's possible to get rid of. Image Credit: Israel Sebastian/Moment/GettyImages We've all done the "turn and whiff" you know, when you try to slyly turn your head to see if your pits are stinking up a storm? But what happens when that smell isonion-y?If you're wondering why your body odor smells like onions, just know that it's not all that weird. Some people just smell like onions.Here's why that can happen, plus tips for how to get rid of onion-smelling sweat.What Causes Body Odor to Smell Like Onions? "Sweat feeds the bacteria present on the skin, and that bacteria produces an odor," Deirdre Hooper, MD, a board-certified dermatologist at Audubon Dermatology in New Orleans, Louisiana, tells LIVESTRONG.com. Advertisement When sweat mixes with bacteria, it creates a sulfur-containing organic compound called thioalcohols. So, the higher amount of bacteria you have, the more you may smell.Here are some reasons why bacteria causes odor.Everyone has a different microbiome (the diverse colony of microorganisms like bacteria that live all over your body), which is influenced by things like diet, stress, environment and genes. "The reason why someone's sweat smells stinkier is based on their own microbiome. It doesn't mean that you're dirty," Dr. Hooper says. Ditto if you've got a sour body odor.You may even have only one armpit that smells bad, because it is naturally sweatier than the other.You're Not Using Antiperspirants A January 2015 study in Microbiome swabbed the underarms of 24 white people. They found that those who didn't use antiperspirants tended to have about 50 times more bacteria than those who swiped with these topical sweat-stoppers. Interestingly enough, armpit odors ranged from "sulfury-cat urine" to "acid-spicy," "foot" (moldy) and "fresh onion."Antiperspirants are different from deodorants, which simply mask the odor in your pits. Antiperspirants reduce the amount that you sweat.Related Reading Bromhidrosis is the medical term for excessive, foul-smelling sweat, per an October 2019 study in JAAD Case Reports. This can happen with a condition called hyperhidrosis, or excessive sweating in the palms, feet, armpits etc., per the Mayo Clinic.A combination of these conditions can make your sweat smell like onions.You Have a Chronic Illness If you start to notice your BO getting extra smelly all of a sudden, it may signal an underlying health condition. Liver disease, kidney disease and hyperthyroidism can lead to excessive, onion-smelling sweat, according to AARP.Talk to your doctor if you are experiencing smelly sweat in addition to other concerning side effects.What Does It Mean If Your Sweat Smells Sweet? You Are Going Through Hormonal Change When preteens begin puberty, their hormones fluctuate, which can cause their body odor to smell.Similarly, people going through menopause experience hormonal change, causing night sweats and hot flashes that can cause onion-smelling sweat, per the Cleveland Clinic.Hormonal imbalances (such as an increase in estrogen) can also cause body odor. Talk to your doctor if you have other hormone-related side effects.Related Reading How to Stop Armpits From Smelling Like Onions If your pits have an onion scent, consider switching from deodorant to antiperspirant. Image Credit: katleho Seisa/E+/GettyImages So, here's the deal: There isn't good science to support that eating onions gives you BO. And, diet changes are not going to get rid of onion-smelling sweat."You can try it, but my advice is keeping the sweat under arms to a minimum," Dr. Hooper says.Because sweat feeds bacteria, stopping sweat will be the best way to control underarm odors, onion-y or not:Prevention starts in the shower. Look for a gentle soap like Dove (Amazon, $10.97 for a pack of 8) or an antibacterial wash or a cleanser with sodium hyochlorite like CLn BodyWash (Amazon, $35.99)"A good 10 to 15 seconds of massaging a cleanser into underarms will do a nice job of temporarily ridding bacteria in this area," Dr. Hooper says.If your armpits still smell after showering, try implementing some of the following steps.Here's a trick worth trying, Dr. Hooper says: After you shower, use a blow dryer to fully dry your underarms. Use a warm not hot setting and stop before/if any redness occurs.The dryness creates a less-friendly environment for bacteria to flourish, which can help prevent sweat from smelling like onions. If you notice any other folds of your skin smell under the breasts, in your bellybutton or in your groin you can use the hairdryer to dry those areas, too, she says.OTC and prescription-strength antiperspirants are available. These traditionally use aluminum to temporarily plug sweat ducts, though some natural antiperspirants use alternative ingredients to decrease sweating.(There is no scientific evidence to say that an antiperspirant will up your risk of cancer or other major health risks, though talk to your doctor if you have severe kidney disease, per Penn Medicine.)In the 2015 Microbiome study mentioned above, people who had a more intense onion armpit odor were those who didn't use antiperspirants.If antiperspirants are not enough and sweating is extremely bothersome for you, talk to your doctor about whether you're a good candidate for Botox injections."This is a safe and effective way to decrease sweating," Dr. Hooper says. It's also perfectly OK to stop sweat in this area your body won't have problems cooling itself off because your armpits aren't sweating.Insurance may cover Botox after you've tried other treatments, so ask about their requirements.Related Reading Is this an emergency? If you are experiencing serious medical symptoms, please see the National Library of Medicines list of signs you need emergency medical attention or call 911. Our editors independently select these products. Making a purchase through our links may earn Well+Good a commissionFor most of us, sweat is a part of everyday life. Its normal to smell after a hard workout or on a particularly hot day. Fun fact: the sweat itself isnt whats causing the stink. Your sudden increase of body odor is actually from sweat mixing with the bacteria on your skin.But why do your armpits sometimes smell like onions? Now thats a pretty extreme smell that anyone would feel concerned (and lets be real, maybe embarrassed) about.Here, a dermatologist shares four reasons why your body odor can smell like onions, and how to get rid of it, so you can go back to feeling fresh and clean.4 causes of armpits that smell like onions1. Your hormones could be fluctuatingHormonal fluctuations can play a role in body odor, saysAzadeh Shirazi, MD, FAAD, a board-certified dermatologist and founder of AziMD Skincare. Yep, you may smell different during your time of the month. Research even suggests your body odor slightly changes during ovulation in order to attract a mate, according to the Cleveland Clinic. (Mother nature works in mysterious ways!) This could also explain why you may smell like onions when youre pregnantyour body is ramping up hormones to support pregnancy, especially in the first trimester.Other times you might notice a change in body odor is during menopause or times of high stress, says Dr. Shirazi. With a decline in estrogen during menopause, higher levels of testosterone dominate, thereby attracting more bacteria to your sweat and causing it to smell stronger. Higher cortisol levels associated with stress can also have a similar effect, she adds.Also, thyroid problems can have an indirect effect on body odor, per the Cleveland Clinic. An overactive thyroid, for example, releases high levels of thyroid hormones, causing changes in your usual body scent. If you suspect youre having a thyroid issue, talk to your doctor. They can run some blood tests to help figure out your best course of treatment.2. You have an underlying conditionIf your BO smells like onions all of a sudden, it could be a sign of an underlying health condition that needs attention and treatment, especially if youre sweating excessively. The medical term for excessive sweating is hyperhidrosis, per the Cleveland Clinic, and it can be a side effect of other conditions like diabetes, overactive thyroid, or liver issues, among others.*]:w-full [&_*_iframe]:w-full flex h-full justify-center items-center static max-h-[400px] data-testid=ad-inline1-1 data-ad-slot-name=inline1-1 data-page-index=1 data-ad-unit-name=inline data-ad-target-screen=desktop data-ad-refresh=true style=min-width:970px;min-height:250px;top:0>While hyperhidrosis can feel embarrassing, its a super common condition. Remember: your sweat itself is odorless, but the more sweat you produce, the more likely the bacteria on your skin will mix with it and make you smell a bit off.According to Dr. Shirazi, theres also a condition called bromhidrosiswhere the bacteria on your skin breaks down the sweat and causes a sulfur or onion-y smell. This odor is more powerful than ordinary sweat, she adds.3. Its your dietWeve all heard the popular phrase, you are what you eat. And in this case, the food youre eating might literally make you smell like onions. Diets rich in spices or ingredients like garlic and onion can change and affect body odor, adds Dr. Shirazi. Other foods that could cause body odor include the following, per the Cleveland Clinic:Red meatCruciferous vegetables (cauliflower, broccoli, cabbage)AsparagusFishAlcoholThere are also certain chemicals in food that can increase bacteria. This bacteria then produce a chemical called trimethylaminethe same one responsible for the stinky odor fish and other aquatic animals give off, per the American Chemical Society.Trimethylamine in the digestive system can also cause more pungent odor from your armpits, says Dr. Shirazi. This can especially be seen with liver or kidney diseases.Diets rich in spices or ingredients like garlic can change and affect body odor. Azadeh Shirazi, MD, dermatologist4. Youre getting olderWhy is it thateverythingseems to change with age? From the color of our hair to the way our bodies move, aging brings about all sorts of new experiencesincluding the way we smell. If you find yourself smelling like onions in the morning, or during other times where youre not necessarily sweating, it could simply be a product of getting older.*]:w-full [&_*_iframe]:w-full flex h-full justify-center items-center static max-h-[400px] data-testid=ad-inline1-2 data-ad-slot-name=inline1-2 data-page-index=1 data-ad-unit-name=inline data-ad-target-screen=desktop data-ad-refresh=true style=min-width:970px;min-height:250px;top:0>Body odor can change as we age due to increased levels of 2-nonenal, says Dr. Shirazi. Its another chemical compound that causes a musty odor. This chemical naturally increases in our bodies as we get older, and is often deemed the stereotypical old person smell, even though its perfectly natural and can be mitigated with hygiene practices like showering daily and using odor-neutralizing products.How to get rid of onion-smelling armpitsIf youve ever been worried youre going to clear a room with your stench, there are ways to help decrease those odds. Here are some top tips to get your armpits smelling fresh and clean.Apply deodorantThe first line of defense (and likely the most obvious) is finding a good deodorant. But keep in mind, theres an important difference between deodorant and antiperspirant.Theres a notable distinction between deodorants and antiperspirants, even though they serve the same purpose to reduce body odor, says Dr. Shirazi. Deodorants mask the smell of body odor usually with fragrances, while antiperspirants use aluminum salts that dissolve and block sweat from forming.So, if your armpits still smell like onions even after putting on deodorant, it might be worth trying an antiperspirant instead, especially if you tend to sweat a lot.TIPIf your armpits smell like onions even right after showering, make sure youre thoroughly washing your armpits with an antibacterial soap and lathering for at least 30 seconds.*]:w-full [&_*_iframe]:w-full flex h-full justify-center items-center static max-h-[400px] data-testid=ad-inline1-3 data-ad-slot-name=inline1-3 data-page-index=1 data-ad-unit-name=inline data-ad-target-screen=desktop data-ad-refresh=true style=min-width:970px;min-height:250px;top:0>Try home remedies or lifestyle changesAccording to the Cleveland Clinic, there are a few home remedies you can try to help stop smelly body odor. A few include:Baking soda: Applying a paste of baking soda and water may help balance acid on your skin and reduce odor.Green tea bags: Placing green tea bags soaked in water on your armpits for a few minutes each day may help block pores and reduce odor.Apple cider vinegar or lemon juice: Spritzing adash of apple cider vinegar or lemon juice mixed with water in a spray bottle can help kill bacteria on the skin (just make sure you dont have open cuts or recently shaved; the acidity could slightly burn!).There are also some lifestyle habits you can incorporate to help your pits stay dry, including the following, per the Cleveland Clinic:Keeping armpit hair shaved (or trimmed)Wearing loose-fitting or cotton clothingRemoving smelly foods from your dietReducing stress levelsAsk about dermatologist-recommended productsA dermatologist can also recommend tried-and-true products they know can give you results. I have my patients use a product with glycolic acid, like the AziMD Skincare Clarify pads, three times a week as it reduces odor-causing bacteria and exfoliates the skin, minimizing the smell. Its also gentle enough to use in the delicate armpit skin.Your dermatologist may also offer a prescription-strength antiperspirant to apply once or twice daily if you deal with hyperhidrosis.If prescription-strength products are not working, theres also Botox. Yep, you read that right. Botox isnt only for reducing face wrinkles; it can also help you manage other medical conditions, including excessive sweating. After several injections in your armpits, your underarm sweat should lighten up, per the Cleveland Clinic.Just keep in mind: not every insurance provider fully covers Botox treatment. If youre unsure whether youre covered, call your insurance company, or ask your doctor about alternative options.When to see a doctorMost of the time, smelly BO is nothing to be concerned about. It happens to the best of us, and can easily be neutralized with proper hygiene and odor-reducing products.That said, if over-the-counter measures are not controlling your onion body odor and excessive sweating, then its best to see your doctor, says Dr. Shirazi. A comprehensive checkup can help determine whether your body odor and health are at all connected, and exactly where the smell is coming from.reviewed by Jennifer Gilbert, MD, MPHGot it, you've been added to our email list. You might also like Youve successfully subscribed to Nutmeg's Nook Welcome back! Youve successfully signed in. Great! Youve successfully signed up. Success! Your email is updated. Your link has expired Success! Check your email for magic link to sign-in.Parents who regularly notice their young childs body odor and cant point to an obvious cause might have reason to be concerned. Childrens body odor is normal starting with early puberty, which is when kids generally develop stinky armpits and start using deodorant. But the presence of body odor in children and toddlers who arent yet at the typical age for puberty 8 to 13 for girls and 9 to 14 for boys, typically could signal that its time to talk to a pediatrician.What Causes Body Odor in ChildrenGenerally, kids body odor begins emerging when apocrine sweat glands the ones found in the armpit become activated. Unlike eccrine glands, which are active throughout the body from birth, apocrine-produced sweat contains substances like fat, which skin-dwelling bacteria then digest. Which is to say, stinky armpits are caused by bacterial poop, more or less.The abnormal stuff parents should worry about is a less-than-puberty-age child starting to develop stinky sweat, especially if its associated with early puberty, says Howard Reinstein, M.D., a spokesman for the American Association of Pediatricians who serves as clinical faculty at Childrens Hospital Los Angeles and the UCLA Medical Center. Being an early bloomer is okay. If you get a little bit of hair when youre 9, 10, 11, thats one thing. If youre 5 or 6, that shouldnt happen. The concern is that somethings wrong.Medical Conditions That Cause Childrens Body OdorThere are also genetic metabolic diseases that can cause body odor in children, such as trimethylaminuria, also known as fish odor syndrome, which smells exactly how it sounds. But the chances that your kids body odor is caused by a rare disease isexceedingly rare. That sounds like a lot of hullabaloo over a little funkiness under the arms, but knowing this can help parents and pediatricians identify broader problems.How Hygiene Affects Childrens Body OdorMore often than not, body odor in children is just a case of poor hygiene that can be mitigated with more regular bathing and maybe some preventative measures for kids who are naturally a bit more sweaty. Parents can also monitor the childs diet, limiting pungent foods like garlic. Some studies also indicate that organic milk devoid of hormones can reduce odor. And if all else fails, deodorant for kids can be a powerful weapon.Even young kids who are excessive sweaters, we may use an antiperspirant they can tolerate, says Reinstein, adding that parents should monitor the underarms for irritation. Even with good hygiene, some kids continue to have a smell to their sweat. Some people, not just kids, have hyperhidrosis they have sweaty hands and feet, and theyre always sweaty even when theyre not exercising and its not hot. People who have that kind of sweat can develop some odor also.That said, the majority of the time, a kids odor can be traced to the fact that kids are generally prone to touching stinky stuff and carrying their odors around with them.Childrens Body Odor: The BasicsBody odor in children mostly occurs as a result of poor hygiene but there are cases where kids with good hygiene have a smell to their sweat.It could also be a result of their interaction with their environment or signify deeper biological issues but itBody odor is normal in kids starting early puberty.Some genetic metabolic diseases, like trimethylaminuria (Fish Odor Syndrome), could also cause body odor in children.Limiting pungent foods like garlic and organic milk devoid of hormones can reduce body odor.This article was originally published on November 13, 2017 Firstly, know that hundreds of people like you search for information every day about sweating and body odor in young girls and boys. Here are some of the keywords often searched on Google related to this topic: Questions in Google As you can see, some parents worry about their daughters (and their sons) body odor as early as age 6. There are even people wondering if its normal for their 4 year old to have smelly armpits. Even younger: infants often sweat a lot when they sleep, and this body odor as early as a few months old can be concerning! However, its a natural phenomenon: babies and young children have more difficulty regulating their body temperature than adults. Hence, they sometimes sweat more in an attempt to regulate it better. But why does this happen more in some children? Thats what were going to explore. Sweating is one of the many physical characteristics that vary among individuals, including children. Often due to genetic reasons. When sweating becomes excessive and troublesome in children (as in adults), its called hyperhidrosis. There are two forms of hyperhidrosis: Primary hyperhidrosis: the most common, occurring in 90% of cases. Its considered idiopathic: without identifiable cause, probably of genetic origin; Secondary hyperhidrosis: in 10% of cases. Its linked to a disease, medication intake, or a particular condition. See diseases causing excessive sweating. Both primary and secondary hyperhidrosis can begin in infants or very young children. Although most often, it starts at puberty. If your child sweats more than average, they are likely affected by primary hyperhidrosis. You can discuss this with your general practitioner (there arent really doctors specialized in sweating) to rule out a specific cause. One can sweat excessively without necessarily smelling bad. Sweat itself is odorless. Its only when sweat comes into contact with bacteria present on the skin that it can produce unpleasant odors. Again, not all children or adults are the same. Some naturally have more bacteria on their skin surface, leading their sweat to smell worse. The clothing and underwear worn as well as the sheets used for sleeping can also increase bad odors, especially if they are warm, damp, and not breathable. See: anti-sweat sheets (coming soon in english) Just like poor personal hygiene. From experience, however, I know that it is quite rare to be concerned about the bad odor of ones sweat AND have poor personal hygiene! Its important to distinguish between two things: Sweating more than average, without necessarily having sweat that smells bad. Having sweat that smells bad. Because depending on what bothers us (the bad odor vs. the excess sweat regardless of odor), the treatments and tips to implement will not be the same. Children have great adaptability. Even if excessive sweating can lead to some teasing from their peers, its not certain that they will suffer from it in the medium or long term. And even without that, like all children, they will be the target of new teasing. Perhaps their sweating bothers them when practicing sports with some of their friends, like climbing or judo. But isnt this an opportunity to discover other sports in which hyperhidrosis wont be a hindrance at all, like soccer or athletics? As a parent, you may feel that excessive sweating or bad odors must greatly bother your child. But when you look at it objectively, you may realize that its not really the case. Some people, even those with severe hyperhidrosis, did not suffer from their sweating during childhood. Some parents who had hyperhidrosis as children also say, I dont want him/her to suffer like I did. But its their retrospective adult perspective on the disease that makes them say that. Perhaps if they had been asked as children, they were actually not happier or sadder than other children their age. These are points to reflect on, and its up to you, of course, to make of them what you will! Is your child complaining that their sweat smells bad or is bothersome? In this case, using deodorants (to combat bad odors) or antiperspirants (to sweat less) is an option. There are now studies testing the effectiveness of antiperspirants in children (Remington 2021). They are not contraindicated, and there is no reason to think that, when used with caution, they are dangerous for children and adolescents. Even though as a precaution, some websites like Etiaxil specify a minimum age of 15 years to use them. Its possible to test the effectiveness of an antiperspirant, for example, in a teenager suffering from excessive underarm sweating. Antiperspirants are most commonly based on aluminum salts. There are specific ones for each part of the body: armpits, feet, hands. Heres a selection: Some people (this was my case) describe becoming accustomed to antiperspirants: after a certain time, they no longer have an effect, both in adults and children. There are also simple deodorants that can mask odors. For example, alum stone (see on Amazon), or simply washing the armpits several times a day with Marseille soap. Antiperspirants should be applied to dry skin, preferably in the evening. Certain textile materials are less likely to cause bad odors. Also, the looser and more temperature-appropriate a garment is, the less likely it is to cause sweat odors. Here are the materials to avoid in case of malodorous sweating in children: Flannel cotton: cotton woven in a way that retains more body heat Sponge (80% cotton and 20% polyester): less effective than pure cotton for anti-perspirant properties Silk: to be avoided, as it retains a lot of moisture. Struggling with persistent body odor, even with good hygiene? You might be dealing with bromhidrosis, a condition where sweat mixes with bacteria on the skin, creating an unpleasant smell. Unlike regular body odor, bromhidrosis is stronger, long-lasting, and often hard to control with basic deodorants.The good news? There are effective ways to manage and treat it, from simple lifestyle changes to advanced medical solutions. In this guide, well break down the causes, symptoms, and best treatment optionsso you can feel fresher and more confident every day.What Is Bromhidrosis?Bromhidrosis is a medical condition characterized by an abnormally offensive body odor (B.O) that often reminds of onions or sulfur. The odor results from the interaction between sweat and skin bacteria, particularly when sweat contains high levels of lipids and proteins.The smell of bromhidrosis can vary depending on factors like diet, hygiene, and the bacteria present on the skin. However, its generally described as:Pungent and musky:A strong, lingering odor that doesnt go away easily.Cheesy or sour:Similar to the smell of aged cheese or fermented foods due to the breakdown of sweat proteins by bacteria.Onion-like or garlicky Especially if certain foods are a contributing factor.Fecal or sulfuric:In severe cases, the odor can resemble rotten eggs or even a fecal-like smell due to specific bacterial activity.Sweaty and ammonia-like:Some people describe it as a mix of strong sweat and ammonia, particularly when the body is breaking down proteins for energy.Because the intensity and character of the odor depend on individual body chemistry and hygiene habits, some people may experience a milder scent while others struggle with a more overpowering smell.There are two types of bromhidrosis: apocrine and eccrine.Apocrine BromhidrosisApocrine bromhidrosis is the most common type of bromhidrosis and is linked to sweat from the apocrine glands. These sweat glands are located in the armpits and genital area, becoming active during puberty.Unlike the watery sweat from eccrine glands (which help regulate body temperature), apocrine sweat is thicker and contains proteins and lipids. On its own, this sweat doesnt smellbut when bacteria on the skin break it down, it can create a strong, persistent odor.In other words, when you have apocrine bromhidrosis, B.O. is the byproduct of lipid-rich sweat mixing with skin bacteria. When these two come together, they produce thioalcoholscompounds that smell like sulfur, onions or raw meat.So, if your armpit sweat smells like onions, cheese or garlic, it may be a sign of apocrine bromhidrosis.Read more: How to Get Rid of Armpit Odor: 11 Ways to Stay FreshEccrine BromhidrosisEccrine bromhidrosis is the rarer form of bromhidrosis. Eccrine sweat glands are found all over the body, including the palms and soles, as well as the head or torso. Unlike apocrine sweat (which is thick and protein-rich), eccrine sweat is mostly water and salt, so it doesnt naturally have a strong smell.However, when it mixes with bacteria, environmental factors, or metabolic waste, it can develop an unpleasant odor. It happens when sweat from your eccrine glands softens the keratin on your skin. The softer the keratin is, the easier it is for bacteria to break down. This break-down process produces a stenchy odor, such as:Ammonia-like: Common in people who eat high-protein diets or have metabolic disorders.Vinegar or sour-smelling:Often linked to bacterial or fungal growth.Sweaty and stale:A general musty smell from prolonged dampness.Eccrine bromhidrosis is often easier to manage than apocrine bromhidrosis, but if odor persists despite good hygiene, it may be worth seeing a doctor to rule out underlying health issues.What Causes Bromhidrosis?While everyone produces sweat, not everyone experiences bromhidrosiscertain factors make some people more prone to it. Weve already covered the differences between apocrine and eccrine sweat, so lets focus on what else can contribute to this condition.GeneticsChronic B.O. can run in the family. Studies show that there is a strong correlation between the ABCC11 gene and bromhidrosis. This same gene is present in individuals with wet ear wax. So, believe it or not, if you have wet ear wax, youre more likely to have bromhidrosis.ObesityHaving large amounts of excess fat on your body makes you more susceptible to bromhidrosis.Excess fat creates skin folds, and these warm, dark crevices are the perfect environment for sweat and bacteria to mix and produce an odor. Because these areas can be challenging to clean, you may neglect them when you bathe or shower. Failing to cleanse and exfoliate these areas allows bacteria and sweat to fester and create a pervasive odor.Read more:Breaking Down the Relationship Between Weight and SweatingDiabetesSometimes, bromhidrosis can be mistaken for a condition called diabetic ketoacidosis, which can occur if you have untreated diabetes. When you have diabetes, your body doesnt produce enough insulin to regulate your metabolism. As a result, you start to break down fat which causes acids to build up in your bloodstream. This process can result in B.O. and bad breath.IntertrigoIntertrigo is a rash caused by trapped moisture and sweat. Although the most common form of intertrigo is infant diaper rash, adults can also get it from lack of air circulation to their skin.When intertrigo goes untreated, bacteria thrive in moist, friction-prone areas which can lead to chronic B.O.ErythrasmaErythrasma is a bacterial infection caused by humid, tropical climates that manifests as a pink skin rash. The bacteria that causes this rash, Corynebacterium, naturally occurs on your skin. Its also one of the bacteria that exists in excess for those with chronic B.O.HyperhidrosisBacteria and sweat are key components of bromhidrosis. So, if you suffer from hyperhidrosis or excessive sweating, youre more likely to have chronic B.O. as well. If you think sweat or hyperhidrosis is contributing to your bromhidrosis, its best to treat hyperhidrosis first to reduce the sweat thats affecting your B.O. issue.Diet & MetabolismWhat you eat can influence how your sweat smells. Certain foods contain sulfuric or pungent compounds that can make B.O. worse, including:Garlic and onions: High in sulfur, which can lead to a stronger smell.Red meat: Harder to digest, sometimes causing a more pungent odor.Spicy foods and alcohol: Can trigger excessive sweating, leading to more odor.Caffeine: Stimulates sweat production, making odor more noticeable.Certain medications can also contribute to bromhidrosis by increasing sweat production, altering metabolism, or affecting the bodys chemical balance. Common culprits include:Antidepressants and psychiatric drugs: Some SSRIs and antipsychotics can trigger excessive sweating.Pain relievers (NSAIDs and opioids): May lead to increased sweat and odor changes.Hormonal medications: Birth control, HRT, and testosterone therapy can alter sweat composition.Diabetes medications and insulin: Can cause a fruity or acetone-like sweat odor.Chemotherapy drugs: May change metabolism, leading to unusual B.O.Antibiotics and antifungals: Can temporarily shift skin microbiota and sweat scent.Blood pressure, thyroid, and steroid medications: Often linked to excessive sweating, worsening odor.If you notice a change in B.O. after starting a medication, talk to your doctor about possible alternatives. Good hygiene and moisture-wicking fabrics can help manage symptoms.Read more:10+ Foods That Reduce Excessive SweatingBromhidrosis vs. Regular Body OdorBromhidrosis differs from regular B.O. in intensity, persistence, and underlying causes:Its easy to keep natural B.O. under control with good hygiene habits and over-the-counter treatments like antiperspirant and deodorant. But when you have bromhidrosis, these simple solutions dont work.Heres a breakdown between normal B.O. and bromhidrosis:Common Signs & Symptoms of BromhidrosisIf youre wondering why you smell like onions or cheese, theres a good chance you have bromhidrosis. Most of the time, you can detect bromhidrosis from its distinct scent. Common symptoms of this condition include:Constant (but not overpowering) B.O.B.O. within 30 minutes of showering or bathingA cheese or meat-like smell coming from your underarms or groinA garlic or onion-like smell coming from your breasts, underarms or groinSocial anxiety due to B.O.Doctors can diagnose bromhidrosis by swabbing and testing the bacteria on your skin.Excessive amounts of Corynebacterium, Propionibacterium, Staphylococcus and Micrococcus usually indicate chronic B.O. Staphylococcus is typically the strongest-smelling bacteria.Being able to spot the signs of bromhidrosis is a helpful first step in overcoming chronic B.O. But to solve the problem, you also need to understand the underlying cause of your condition.Bromhidrosis, whether caused by the apocrine or eccrine glands, is marked by a few distinct signs and symptoms that make it easy to identify. While B.O. is something most people experience from time to time, bromhidrosis refers to a persistent, often stronger-than-usual odor that doesnt go away easily. Heres what to look out for:Persistent, Strong OdorThe most noticeable symptom of bromhidrosis is a strong, persistent B.O. that doesnt improve with regular hygiene practices like showering and using deodorant. This odor is often described as musky, sour, or even ammonia-like, depending on the type of bromhidrosis (apocrine or eccrine).Odor Concentrated in Specific AreasWhile you may experience B.O. in various parts of your body, bromhidrosis tends to concentrate in specific areas, especially where you have high concentrations of sweat glands. The most affected areas include:Armpits (axillary bromhidrosis): The most common area affected by bromhidrosis. Smell is typically strong, musky, or sour.Feet (plantar bromhidrosis): Eccrine glands on the soles of the feet produce sweat that, when trapped in shoes and socks, creates a moist environment for bacterial and fungal growth, leading to a strong odor. Smell is often described as smelly cheese or rotten feet.Groin and genital area: Apocrine glands in this region produce sweat that mixes with bacteria, dead skin, and moisture, causing a strong musky odor.Underbreasts and skin folds: In people with excess body weight or larger breasts, sweat accumulates in skin folds, leading to bacterial and fungal growth that worsens odor. The smell is often yeasty or sour. Fungal infections, like yeast, can also contribute to the odor.Scalp: Excessive sweating on the scalp, combined with oil production and bacterial activity, can create an unpleasant smell.Hands and palms: Though less common, excessive eccrine sweating on the palms can create a noticeable odor, especially when in contact with certain materials or objects.Worsening Symptoms With Heat or StressHeat, physical activity, or stress can trigger more sweat production, which, in turn, may worsen the odor. For people with bromhidrosis, the odor can intensify during hot weather or stressful situations when sweat levels increase, allowing bacteria to thrive.Not Responding to Regular DeodorantsIf you've tried different deodorants and antiperspirants but the smell still persists, it could be a sign of bromhidrosis. Standard deodorants might not be enough to manage the strong odor caused by bacterial breakdown of sweat, and stronger, prescription-strength solutions may be needed.Increased SweatingIn some cases, bromhidrosis is linked with hyperhidrosis, a condition where the body sweats excessively. This extra moisture provides more opportunity for bacteria to break down sweat and create unpleasant smells.If you notice any of these symptoms regularly, especially if they interfere with your daily activities or confidence, it might be time to seek treatment options or consult a healthcare professional.Bromhidrosis TreatmentsThankfully, bromhidrosis is treatable. Here are some ways to mitigate excessive B.O. and stop smelling like onions:Upgrade Your Hygiene RoutineGood hygiene is the first step in keeping B.O. under control. If regular washing isnt enough, here are a few ways to keep the bacteria on your skin to a healthy minimum:Use antibacterial or germicidal soap: Choose gentle liquid or cream body wash over solid soap, and avoid scented products that can worsen your B.O.Shave excess body hair: Hair traps bacteria and sweat, which aggravates bromhidrosis.Remove or wash sweaty clothes immediately: This gives bacteria less time to break down sweat.Take regular warm baths or showers: Warm water can help kill the bacteria on your skin. Shower twice a day and pay close attention to extra sweaty areas, especially on a hot day.Use extra-strength or prescription deodorant: Over-the-counter products might not cut it. Consult your doctor or dermatologist to explore prescription-strength deodorants and solutions.Exfoliate regularly