

# RAISING A STINK



SHAAN SETH

Clubs are smoke-free now but clubbers are dealing with another stench – body odour

**S**o clubs are smoke-free and you can now get some oxygen along with a drink: But before you say cheers, take a deep breath.

Chances are, you will splutter into your tippie.

There is a new problem raising a stink in clubs – body odour.

"Now that smoking has been banned in clubs, I smell a lot more of other people," says project events executive Ann Moey, 23. "The combination of sweat and cologne is not a pleasant one."

She may be on to something. Doctors say the smell of smoke may have previously masked the BO that's now lingering in clubs.

"Smoke can dampen our sense of smell, leading to decreased detection of body odour," says Dr Daniel Chan, deputy medical director of Shenton Medical Group.

Bad news, guys: He says men are more susceptible because they sweat more.

Girls would say it figures, going by

what Dr Wong Su-Ni, a consultant dermatologist from Pacific Specialist Practice, says: "People with sweaty feet and armpits tend to be more prone to odour."

Pongy patrons may even be clueless as to the real reason a potential hot date turns them down on the dancefloor.

Apparently, those suffering from body odour are usually oblivious to the fact that they stink.

"It's sensory adaptation," says Dr Peter Goh, a consultant general surgeon with Raffles Hospital. "Their sensations are dulled by long and constant exposure."

So what causes body odour? According to Dr Goh, it arises from secretions from the eccrine and apocrine glands in armpits, below the chest and around the groin.

Eccrine glands produce sweat which is odourless on its own but allows bacteria to flourish. The bacteria breaks down the sweat, producing fatty acids which result in the dreaded BO.

Apocrine glands, on the other hand, produce an odourless oily fluid which is decomposed by bacteria on the skin's surface.

Other causes include decomposing dead skin, especially with excessive perspiration – which explains why your feet stink – and substances secreted in sweat such as garlic and drugs.

There is hope for the aromatic alpha-male, though.

"Hygiene is still the key to preventing

body odour," says Dr Chan. Have regular baths or showers at least once a day and stick to anti-bacterial washes such as chlorhexidine which help to get rid of bacteria.

Wear fresh clothes daily. Wash them at high temperatures and dry them as quickly as possible. "Bacteria can survive in damp clothing, producing a characteristic stench," says Dr Chan.

Still, Dr Wong notes that most of her patients who suffer from BO are clean people who shower regularly.

As well as frequent washing, she recommends avoiding strong-smelling food, which may worsen odour; and

using deodorants with anti-bacterial substances and anti-perspirants.

If all that fails, there are Botox injections and even surgery: A sympathectomy destroys certain nerves that become more active during times of stress. Botox injections cost from \$1,000 to \$1,600 a session, while a sympathectomy costs between \$8,000 and \$10,000 at the National University of

Singapore's University Surgical Centre.

Any solution is worth it. "Patients usually suffer from social embarrassment and isolation because their friends and family sometimes avoid them," says Dr Chan, in somewhat of an understatement, if you happen to be a clubber gasping for air.

shaans@sph.com.sg

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## HOW TO BANISH BO

- ◆ Take regular baths or showers. Make sure you wash your armpits, genitalia and feet, where sweating tends to be worse.
- ◆ Use anti-bacterial washes such as chlorhexidine. Available at Watsons pharmacies, a 100ml bottle costs \$3.95; a 500ml bottle, \$5.95.
- ◆ Avoid wearing closed shoes all the time; do wear them with fresh cotton socks. Allow your feet to breathe by wearing open-toed sandals whenever you can.
- ◆ Practically impossible for laska-loving Singaporeans, but avoid spicy foods before going clubbing. Otherwise the smell seeps through your pores.
- ◆ Try these: anti-perspirants to reduce the amount of sweat your body produces; deodorants to mask the pong.
- ◆ Shave your armpits. The hair there provides a greater surface area for sweat to adhere to, allowing bacteria to flourish.
- ◆ Wash clothes thoroughly, especially socks and underwear that come in contact with your more sweaty bits.
- ◆ Wear fresh clothes daily so you don't reek of yesterday's sweat.