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Background

Whole-body deodorants are a new category of personal care products marketed for use on multiple body sites beyond the underarms, including the chest, back, groin, feet, and under the breasts. They are promoted as providing “all-day freshness” and reducing odour across the body.

NZDSI Position

The NZDSI does not support the routine use of whole-body deodorants. These products are unnecessary for the vast majority of people, may cause skin irritation or allergic reactions, and risk undermining public understanding of the normal role of sweating.

Key Points

Sweating is normal and essential.

Sweat regulates body temperature and contains natural antimicrobial factors. Eccrine sweat (all over the body) is usually odourless. Odour mainly arises when bacteria break down apocrine sweat from the armpits and groin.

No Medical Need

Deodorants are appropriate for the underarm if desired but applying them widely across the body is not necessary and increases exposure to fragrances, preservatives, and irritants.

Potential Harms

Sensitive areas (groin, under breasts, skin folds) are more prone to irritation, dermatitis, or disruption of the skin microbiome. Intimate sprays and washes, in particular, are discouraged.

General Advice

To reduce body odour, simple measures are usually sufficient:

- Daily washing with soap-free cleansers or water.
- Wearing breathable, moisture-wicking fabrics.
- Good foot hygiene and shoe rotation.

When to Seek Medical Advice

People experiencing excessive sweating (hyperhidrosis), sweating that soaks clothing, interferes with daily life, or is associated with odour despite hygiene, should see a dermatologist. Safe and effective treatments exist, including prescription antiperspirants, botulinum toxin injections, and oral medications.

Summary

Whole-body deodorants are primarily a marketing trend. Sweating is not something that needs to be “policed” across all body sites. The NZDSI advises against their widespread use, encourages simple hygiene practices, and recommends medical consultation for those with troublesome sweating.