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**That spray under your arm could be a breast cancer link**

Mar 1 2006  
Madeleine Brindley, Western Mail

EXPERTS will today call for more research into a possible link between deodorants and breast cancer.

Evidence is mounting that an aluminium-based compound found in common antiperspirant agents can break through the skin and potentially cause breast cancer.

Once inside the body, it is feared the compounds could mimic the hormone oestrogen, which is know to affect a woman's risk of breast cancer.

A review published today in the Journal of Applied Toxicology calls for further research to evaluate the possibility that this could increase the risk of getting breast cancer.

In the past few years scientists have found a number of compounds in the environment which either mimic or interfere with oestrogen.

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These compounds are normally complex molecules and are found in many plants, and used in materials like detergents, pesticides and plastics.

But scientists are realising that a variety of simple metal ions, including aluminium and cadmium can also bind to the body's oestrogen receptors and influence their action.

Dr Philippa Darbre, who works in the School of Biological Sciences, at the University of Reading, and who wrote the review, said, "Since oestrogen is known to be involved in the development and progression of human breast cancer, any components of the environment that have oestrogenic activity and which can enter the human breast could, theoretically, influence a woman's risk of breast cancer."

She said aluminium salts in antiperspirants were a major

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source of exposure to aluminium in humans. But because antiperspirants are sprayed into armpits, exposure to the aluminium salts in the spray are often inadvertently concentrated near the breast.

Dr Darbre said that because women often use sprays immediately after shaving the armpits, when the skin is likely to be damaged, the skin is less able to keep the aluminium out. She said, "It is reasonable to question whether this aluminium could then influence breast cancer."

There are also concerns that smoking introduces cadmium into the body, which, research has shown, can collect in breast tissue.

There are indications that this accumulation of cadmium may also be linked to an increased risk of breast cancer, potentially showing one of the reasons why smoking could be linked to this disease.

Dr Darbre said, "Each of these agents on their own may not have a powerful effect, but we need to see what happens when a number of them act together. It could be that this would have a significant effect on diseases like breast cancer."

Helen Rhys, lead oncology nurse at Welsh cancer charity Tenovus, said, "These sorts of stories cause a lot of concern for people who use antiperspirant as part of their daily hygiene routine.

"But breast cancer is a common and complex disease and there are a number of recognised risk factors involved.

"The consensus of opinion is that more research is needed in this area. If women have concerns they should contact their GP or even phone the Tenovus helpline."

Liz Carroll, head of clinical services at Breast Cancer Care said, "As the extent to which lifestyle and environmental factors increase the risk of developing breast cancer is still uncertain Breast Cancer Care always welcomes new research into this area, where much still needs to be learnt.

"Research studies to date have found no proven link between the use of deodorants and the risk of developing breast cancer. More extensive research in this area is needed to fully determine whether there is a link, and to enable people to make a more informed decision about deodorant use.

"We hear from people with breast cancer or breast health concerns daily through our helpline and website, and know how research into risk factors for breast cancer can cause anxiety.

"It is important however for all people to be aware that age remains the single biggest risk factor."

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