The meaning of sweat [1]

Alice,

What does sweating mean?

Answer

Dear Reader,

A funny (and very smart) person once said, "Don't sweat the petty things and don't pet the sweaty things." This is great advice, but probably not the answer you were looking for. Sweating is a way for the body to chill out when it gets overheated from hot temperatures, physical activity, spicy foods, or even embarrassment. The perspiration that forms on your skin is evaporated by the outside air cooling you down when things get too hot. Sweating also helps rid the body of very small amounts (less than 1% fo the body's total content) of "waste" products [2], such as salt, ammonia, and uric acid. Keep in mind that most of the body's waste products are released via urine and feces. Sweat contains electrolytes (chemicals that are essential for regulating the fluid balance within the body) ? this is why athletes are always chugging "sports drinks" to replace the sodium, potassium, and chloride that their bodies are sweating out all over their athletic gear.

Sweat glands are coiled deep under the skin. They take in water and salts from nearby capillaries and cells and then send them through sweat ducts to the skin's surface. There are two types of sweat glands:

**Apocrine sweat glands**

They are nestled in with the hair follicles in your scalp, underarms, and groin. These glands respond to the adrenaline that's produced when people get nervous or scared, producing a sweat that contains fatty oils. This perspiration also reacts with the bacteria on the skin's surface, generating a sour smell (a.k.a. the stink of fear, the stench of flop sweat). Apocrine sweat glands put the "odor" in B.O.

**Eccrine sweat glands**

The more common sweat gland, they open onto bare skin all over the body and produce a perspiration that's composed mostly of water and salt. These glands are controlled by the hypothalamus ? a part of the brain that acts like the body's thermostat and is responsible for regulating temperature.

The amount of perspiration a person produces is controlled by many factors, including the
environment, activity, and a person's own regulation system. Certain medical conditions and illness can also change the amount of sweat the body produces (as anyone who's ever had a bad case of the flu knows). If you seem to perspire much more or less than others you know, or if the amount of sweat your body makes suddenly increases or decreases, check with your health care provider ? it could be a sign of an underlying health problem.

Alice!
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