“DO I ACTUALLY SMELL?”™

The 5-Minute Reality Check

A simple guide for those moments when you suddenly wonder, “Do I smell?”

Before You Check Again…

You’re sitting in a bus.

At work.

In class.

At the gym.

On a date.

Everything is normal.

Then suddenly, a thought enters your head:

“Wait… do I smell?”

You touch your armpit.

You smell your shirt.

You look at the person beside you.

Someone touches their nose.

And your mind starts connecting the dots.

“That must be because of me.”

So you check again.

You feel better for a few minutes.

Then the thought comes back.

This guide is designed to help you slow that cycle down and respond to the situation more calmly.

Remember:

Worrying that you smell is not proof that you smell.

THE 5-MINUTE REALITY CHECK™

STEP 1 — PAUSE

Don’t immediately smell your shirt or check your armpits.

Take one slow breath.

Then tell yourself:

“I noticed a worry. I don’t have proof yet.”

You’re not trying to convince yourself that everything is perfect.

You’re simply giving yourself a moment before reacting.

STEP 2 — WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED?

Ask:

“What did I actually notice?”

There is a big difference between a **fact** and an **assumption**.

FACT:

“I’ve been outside in the heat for three hours and my shirt is sweaty.”

ASSUMPTION:

“Someone touched their nose, so they must have smelled me.”

Stick to what you actually know.

STEP 3 — CHECK YOUR ROUTINE

Ask yourself:

☐ Have I showered recently?

☐ Am I wearing clean clothes?

☐ Did I properly wash the areas where I sweat?

☐ Did I dry myself properly?

☐ Have I been sweating more than usual?

☐ Have I been exercising?

☐ Have I been outside in hot weather for a long time?

If your normal routine is already handled and there's no obvious reason for concern, **you may not need another check.**

STEP 4 — IS THERE A REAL REASON TO FRESHEN UP?

Sometimes the answer is simply yes.

Maybe you just finished football.

Maybe you've spent hours walking around Lagos in the heat.

Maybe you just left the gym.

Maybe your clothes are damp with sweat.

That's not a disaster.

It's information.

Do this:

1. Find a private place.
2. Freshen up when practical.
3. Change your clothes if necessary.
4. Continue with your day.

Handle the situation. Don’t turn it into a crisis.

STEP 5 — DON’T TURN EVERYONE ELSE INTO A DETECTOR

Someone touches their nose.

Someone opens a window.

Someone moves their chair.

Someone scratches their face.

None of these automatically mean:

“They smelled me.”

People do ordinary things all day.

Your mind can easily interpret normal behaviour differently when you’re already worried.

Ask yourself:

“Do I have actual evidence, or am I trying to guess what someone else is thinking?”

THE ONE-CHECK RULE

Here’s a simple rule you can try:

Check once. Decide. Act. Move on.

Not:

Check.

Check again.

Ask a friend.

Smell your shirt.

Google it.

Buy another product.

Check again.

That cycle can become exhausting.

Instead:

CHECK → ACT → MOVE ON

THE TRAFFIC-LIGHT SYSTEM

🟢 GREEN — NO OBVIOUS PROBLEM

You've followed your normal hygiene routine.

You're wearing clean clothes.

You aren't unusually sweaty.

Your move:
Continue your day.

🟡 YELLOW — YOU'RE SWEATY

You've exercised, travelled, worked outside or spent hours in the heat.

Your move:
Freshen up when practical.

Change clothes if needed.

Then continue your day.

🔴 RED — SOMETHING HAS CHANGED

You notice a persistent or unusual odour despite your normal hygiene routine, particularly if there are other symptoms.

Your move:
Don't keep experimenting with random remedies.

Speak with a qualified healthcare professional.

WHEN THE THOUGHT COMES BACK

It may come back.

That's okay.

When you hear:

"What if I smell?"

Try:

"I've already taken reasonable care of myself. I don't need to keep checking."

Then return your attention to whatever you were doing.

The goal isn't to guarantee that you'll never have the thought.

The goal is to stop the thought from controlling your behaviour.

YOUR 60-SECOND RESET

Screenshot this page.

WHEN THE WORRY HITS:

1. STOP
Don't react immediately.

2. BREATHE
Take one slow breath.

3. ASK
"What actually happened?"

4. CHECK
Is there a genuine reason to freshen up?

5. ACT OR MOVE ON
Handle a real issue. Otherwise, continue your day.

Remember:

A thought is not proof.

YOUR PERSONAL FRESHNESS PLAN

My normal shower/body-care routine:

When I usually sweat the most:

What I normally carry when I'm going out:

My emergency freshness plan:

When I will seek professional help:

One Last Thing

Taking care of your body is good.

Being aware of changes in your body is good.

But you shouldn't have to spend your entire day monitoring yourself.

Take reasonable care of yourself. Then give yourself permission to live.