

Tracking down the human 'odorprint'

October 14 2009

Each of the 6.7 billion people on Earth has a signature body odor -- the chemical counterpart to fingerprints -- and scientists are tracking down those odiferous arches, loops, and whorls in the "human odorprint" for purposes ranging from disease diagnosis to crime prevention. That's the topic of an article in the current issue of *Chemical & Engineering News*, ACS' weekly newsmagazine.

C&EN Senior Correspondent Ivan Amato points out that police long have used trained dogs to sniff out these uniquely personal scents in pursuing criminals. Scientists now are trying to decipher the chemistry of human [odor](#) to develop technology that can detect and classify smells. That's a difficult task, the article says, noting that each person's odorprint is a complex mixture impacted by multiple environmental factors, including diet and cosmetics.

The article describes progress in that direction, explaining that scientists already have identified odors in human breath and skin associated with diabetes, cancer, and other diseases. Scientists are even trying to detect the "smell of deception," or chemical changes that occur with heightened stress that may help screen and identify, for example, terrorists planning to blow up an airplane and criminals intending to rob a bank.

More information: pubs.acs.org/cen/science/87/8741sci2.html

Source: American Chemical Society ([news](#) : [web](#))

Citation: Tracking down the human 'odorprint' (2009, October 14) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-10-tracking-human-odorprint.html>

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