

## **Pheromones: Scent-Ual Attractiveness**

*By Michael Castleman*

What's the aroma of lust? According to Alan Hirsch, M.D., neurologic director of the Smell and Taste Research Foundation in Chicago, it's the familiar spice, cinnamon. Hirsch fitted male medical students' penises with gauges that detected erection, and then exposed them to dozens of fragrances. The only one that got a rise was the smell of hot cinnamon buns. But other aromas may also add sensuality to sex. Try scented candles on your night table, or a bouquet of flowers, or a fragrant herbal potpourri, or a new perfume.

Or try pheromones, the odorless scent of sexual attraction. Odd as this may sound, the key to a new love affair—or heating up the one you're involved in—might be right under your nose, or actually just inside it. That's the location of the little-known, sixth human sense organ, the vomeronasal organ (VNO). The VNO detects virtually odorless chemicals called pheromones. Scientists have known for decades that animals have organs very similar to the VNO. They have also known that animals release pheromones during mating season to signal their sexual availability. But until twenty years ago, anatomists believed that humans did not possess a VNO and did not produce pheromones. Now we know differently.

Back in the 1980s, a research team led by David Berliner, M.D., at the time, an anatomist at the University of Utah, discovered the tiny VNO in pits of the nasal passageways of every person they examined. If people had VNOs, then they had to produce pheromones.

Many animals release pheromones from glands in areas that corresponds to the human armpit. Berliner's team looked there and isolated human pheromones from underarm secretions. In a series of studies, they discovered that heterosexuals respond only to human pheromones released by the opposite sex, while homosexuals respond to those of the same sex. How do they respond? Not sexually. Pheromones are not aphrodisiacs. But under the influence of pheromones people become friendlier, more vivacious, and more attractive. And with these

qualities comes a greater likelihood that a social connection might lead to something more.

Pheromones are not a hot area of research. But a few intriguing studies have been performed:

- British researchers showed 32 young women photographs of men's faces and asked them to rate their attractiveness. While viewing the photos, some of the women were also exposed without their knowledge to human male pheromones. The women exposed to the pheromones rated the men significantly more attractive.
- San Francisco State University researchers took these findings into the bedroom. They asked 36 heterosexual women, average age 27, to record their social connections with men for several weeks, everything from dating to intercourse. Then the scientists gave the women a vial of either a placebo or a laboratory synthesized female pheromone, and asked them to add it to cologne and use it daily. After six weeks, the pheromone group recorded significantly more social connections with men: conversations, more dates, more kissing, more sleeping in the same bed, and more intercourse.

Pheromones work the same way for men. Researchers at the Athena Institute for Women's Wellness in Chester Springs, Pennsylvania added a placebo or male pheromones to cologne worn by 38 heterosexual men, aged 26 to 42. Like the women, the men who used the pheromones proved more attractive and reported social interactions with women, more dates, more kissing, more sleeping in the same bed, and more intercourse.

Pheromones work for people of all ages. Harvard researchers asked 44 postmenopausal women, average age 57, to use either a placebo perfume or one laced with human female pheromones. Again, the pheromone group reported significantly more interest from men, more affection from them and more lovemaking.

People produce pheromones in extremely tiny quantities, so the chemical cannot be harvested the way, say, sperm can be. All pheromone products use laboratory-synthesized pheromones, either male or female. Some commercial pheromone products claims to be mixtures of male and female chemicals that work on both sexes. However, all the research to date has used either female pheromones (which attract men) or male pheromones (which attract women).

Pheromones are not fragrant. In fact, they are virtually odorless. So don't be surprised when you rub them into your skin and smell nothing. Despite the lack of scent, their tiny molecules get into the VNO and make the gender you're interested in feel more sociable toward you.

Pheromones also go a long way. You don't have to use much to send the scent signal you want to broadcast.

Many companies market what they claim to be pheromone products. Unfortunately, consumers have no way of knowing if the products they buy contain pheromones. The San Francisco State researchers used a product called Realm, which costs about \$70 from [world-breakthroughs.com/pheromones.htm](http://world-breakthroughs.com/pheromones.htm).