

The healthy woman's guide to good looks

EDITED BY COLLEEN SULLIVAN AND BRETT HILL

WRITTEN BY MICHELE BENDER

beauty

[SCIENCE]

can perfume make you thin?

The scent you wear may do more than smell sweet.

IMAGINE IF LOOKING thinner were as easy as spraying on cologne. (We'd all be lined up at the fragrance counter, right?) Actually, it's not as crazy as it sounds. A 10-year study conducted by the Smell & Taste Treatment and Research Foundation in Chicago shows that your choice of scent may affect how svelte you appear to others.

To a group of men, women who wore a floral-spicy perfume seemed 4 pounds lighter than they actually were, the ➤

FASHION STYLING: RENATA CHAPLINSKY/TAUCHEE; ARTISTS: PROP. STYLING: CĂBIRIA ROSĂ/ARTIST; NOAH HATTON/KRAMER & KRAMER; MAKEUP: KRISTINE GULMAN/RJ BENNETT

DECEMBER 2003

scientists found. That was true even when the men didn't like the scent; but if they did, the fragrance wearers appeared a total of 12 pounds trimmer. One hundred other odor combinations were put to the test, but none of them had the same slimming effect. "It's the olfactory equivalent of wearing something with vertical stripes," explains study author Alan R. Hirsch, M.D., the foundation's neurological director.

So why does this particular aroma shave off perceived pounds? Hirsch isn't entirely certain, but he does have a few theories. First, the scent may have neurologically changed the way the men interpreted body shape. Or, possibly, the odor induced a lighter mood. Happy people tend to view others as similar to themselves, and because most of the men in the study were in shape, they saw the women the same way. A third theory is that the perfume may have distracted the smellers from seeing areas of fat. Finally, the men may have found the fragrance sexually stimulating, which in turn may have caused them to find the women thinner and more attractive.

Researchers say larger-scale studies are needed to confirm the initial results, and they can't specify exactly which florals and spices produce the desired outcome—it

depends on the person doing the smelling. But this study's implications could go beyond looking sexy for your husband or lean at your neighborhood Christmas party. "Previous research shows that if a woman thinks others view her as heavy, even if she isn't overweight and doesn't see herself that way, she may avoid socializing and feel less confident," Hirsch says. "Perhaps if she thinks she's being viewed as thinner because of her perfume, she'll be more self-assured."

The author also believes these findings could help people with eating disorders. "The way they perceive their weight is markedly inconsistent with reality," says Hirsch, who is studying the ways scent affects self-perception in anorexia and bulimia sufferers. "If a slimming odor could give them a more positive view of their bodies, they might be able to change their focus from negative feelings about themselves to more-healthy endeavors." Experts think this theory may

have some value but are skeptical of its practical applications. "While perception is a tremendous factor in body-image satisfaction and an important aspect of both developing and recovering from an eating disorder, it is only one of the aspects involved," says Adrienne Ressler, body-image specialist at The Renfrew Center, a nationwide facility for the treatment of anorexia and bulimia. "Eating disorders are very difficult to treat. But even potentially helpful research findings are always welcomed."

If you want to give the theory a test yourself, you'll have to experiment to find a floral-spicy scent that works for you. Try one of these.

Clinique Simply (above left, \$39.50), a modern oriental, blends white flower petals, smoked wood, and surprising ingredients like soy milk and nuts for a crisp, subtle effect.

Escada Magnetism (above center, \$58) meshes refreshing basil with jasmine, iris, and freesia. The fuchsia cut-glass bottle spices up the top of any dresser.

Estée Lauder Pleasures Intense (above right, \$45) is a classic. One sniff of this vanilla, lily, peony, and rose blend, and you'll know why. **B**



PHOTO: DARRYL PATTERSON; ILLUSTRATION: HING LEE



[WE TRIED IT]

false lashes in a bottle

FRENCH WOMEN have lots of beauty secrets, like how to eat croissants and still stay slim. Here's one they're willing to share: Getting fat lashes doesn't require gluing them on. The trick is a mascara-like product called lash extender. Longcils Boncza Longcilextender (\$30) and Talika Lash Extender (\$25) are some of the first to arrive in America, and they're a cinch to use. Apply one coat of

your regular mascara; while it's still wet, brush on the extender, which has tiny fibers that cling to the first coat. Your second application of mascara will stick to the fibers, making lashes look lush. (Keep a lash brush handy to smooth out clumps.) The results may be subtle, but that suits us just fine. Extenders are safe for contact lens wearers and women with sensitive eyes.

Copyright of Health is the property of Time Inc. Health and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.