

Hyperhidrosis

Hyperhidrosis (excessive sweating) is a disorder in which individuals sweat more than the body would normally need to maintain optimal temperature. It affects approximately 3% of the population, with 30% of those patients experiencing severe hyperhidrosis. This condition can affect work productivity, confidence, social comfort, emotional wellbeing, and wardrobe choices. Studies show that hyperhidrosis impacts an individual's quality of life similar to or even greater than other well-known dermatological conditions such as severe acne or psoriasis.

What causes hyperhidrosis?

Focal hyperhidrosis, also known as primary hyperhidrosis, has an unknown cause. This type of hyperhidrosis is localized to one or more of the following areas:

- Underarms (axillary hyperhidrosis)
- Hands (palmar hyperhidrosis)
- Feet (plantar hyperhidrosis)
- Face (facial hyperhidrosis)

Although this type of hyperhidrosis has an unknown cause the way it affects sufferers appears to be related to over-activity of the central nervous system, thereby causing an overactive stimulation of local sweat glands.

Generalized hyperhidrosis, also known as secondary hyperhidrosis, is caused by other underlying conditions (e.g. endocrine disorders, menopause, obesity, nerve damage, and rarely, some types of drugs). This type of hyperhidrosis generally occurs over the whole body, and is usually treated by addressing the underlying condition. Therefore, the majority of information contained within this handout pertains to treatment of focal hyperhidrosis.

Treatment Options

There are several ways to treat hyperhidrosis. A stepwise approach is typically recommended beginning with topical antiperspirants, oral medications, and even Botox injections.

1. Topical antiperspirants Dry sol (20% aluminum chloride) solution or Otee products (such as Certain Dry): Topical antiperspirants are best applied to clean dry skin. Air drying the skin prior to application with a fan or hair dryer on a cold air setting can be helpful. Applying the product when your body is producing the least sweat is ideal, often this is in the evening hours. Frequency of application is determined by your response, sometimes as little as 1-2 times per week. Side effects are limited to local skin irritation.
2. Oral medications: Anticholinergic medications can decrease sweat production in a generalized fashion affecting the full body. They can be very effective; however side effects may limit the usage of the medication. Side effects can include blurred vision, dry mouth, constipation, urinary hesitancy (difficulty urinating), anorexia, sedation, and hyperthermia (over-heating).
3. Botox injections: Results of Botox injections can last 4-6 months or longer. If prior treatments have been attempted unsuccessfully, often insurance will cover the cost of the procedure. Side effects can include temporary local pain and swelling, sweating in areas distant from the treatment site, itching, headache, and anxiety.