

Excess Sweating - Hyperhidrosis

The medical term for excessive sweating is Hyperhidrosis. The problem may be limited to a few problem areas or may be all over. The armpits and the palms are the areas most often troublesome. Excessive sweating starts after puberty. It may be present to some degree all the time, but is at its worst when under stress such as during exams, interviews or dating. Excess sweating which affects areas other than the armpits and palms may a sign of serious problems. Systemic, neurological and anxiety conditions need to be ruled out; however most cases have no underlying cause.

Most over-the-counter antiperspirants are not strong enough to do the job. The best product is "Certain Dry" pads. A stronger form of this is available by prescription (Drysol). It is somewhat irritating and will stain clothing. It is applied at bedtime to completely dry skin. It is washed off in the morning shower. Do not use a regular deodorant afterwards. Repeat the treatment nightly until the sweating is under control. If it does not work after one or two weeks, begin covering the affected area with a square of "saran wrap" overnight. After it begins to work, use once or twice weekly to maintain the effect, and use a regular deodorant on the other days. The medication is less effective on the thick skin of the palms and soles.

If these treatments don't work well enough there are alternatives. Botox injections, a treatment now popular for wrinkles, will stop sweating for 6 or 8 months, but is expensive. On the palms, it may cause mild, temporary weakness of the grip. Oral Robinul pills are very safe and will decrease sweating, but they have annoying, mild side effects. Good results are often obtained by driving the Robinul into the skin directly with a Drionic electrophoretic machine.

The Drionic machine is an electrical device that plugs up your sweat pores. You can purchase the machine and apply it to hands, armpits or feet. It causes a tingling feeling that some find unpleasant. After several uses, you will sweat less for 4 to 6 weeks. To really get it to work you need to use it one half an hour every night per site.

A surgical procedure called endoscopic transthoracic sympathectomy can cure hyperhidrosis of the palms. It must be done by an experienced surgeon. It will cause some increased sweating on other parts of the body, but most patients don't seem to be bothered by this. Some liposuction surgeons know a special technique to scrape out the sweat glands from the armpits. These treatments should be discussed in detail before they are considered.