



Do you *suffer*  
from

*Excessive  
perspiration?*

BY SONYA FERGUSON

HYPERHIDROSIS, OR EXCESSIVE SWEATING, can be disabling and embarrassing, affecting social and occupational activities. You may have suffered from excessive sweating for years, in the belief that the only thing you could do was to keep applying antiperspirant and changing your clothes.

Hyperhidrosis affects millions of people around the world. Although high temperatures or stress can increase perspiration, they don't cause hyperhidrosis. Instead, hyperhidrosis may be an inherited trait that stops the body from properly regulating its temperature.

Hyperhidrosis appears to be linked to overactivity in the hypothalamus, the area of the brain that maintains body temperature, and the sympathetic nerves that control sweat glands.

Primary hyperhidrosis starts in childhood and tends to be localised to the palms, soles and/or the armpits (axillae). Secondary hyperhidrosis is due to an underlying medical cause such as diabetes, overactive thyroid, obesity, menopause, anxiety or medication. It can often affect the whole body.

First line treatment for localised hyperhidrosis is an antiperspirant spray, stick or roll-on containing an aluminium salt. These work best if applied last thing at night before retiring. Many products also contain deodorants to disguise unpleasant odour.

Oral anticholinergic medication can reduce sweating but may cause side effects such as blurred vision, dry mouth and constipation. They are most useful for generalised hyperhidrosis.

Iontophoresis can be very effective for

hyperhidrosis affecting palms, soles and armpits. This involves using a device to pass a mild electric current through the skin while soaking in tap water.

Botulinum toxin injections are the most effective treatment for axillary hyperhidrosis. They block the sympathetic nerves in the armpits and can stop sweating for a few months.

The sweat glands under the arms can also be removed surgically, by liposuction, cutting

affected areas. There is no downtime, it is safe, easy and lasts on average 4-9 months. It costs \$1100, including GST.

Tristram Clinic also has an iontophoresis machine which people can use short-term while deciding whether to invest in their own machine.

Socially, emotionally, occupationally and financially the treatment of hyperhidrosis cannot be undervalued. To some the treatment is life changing. Constantly wet skin can cause

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under the skin or by removing all the skin that contains the sweat glands. This third option may require skin grafting if the area removed is large, and it may leave a significant scar. Transthoracic endoscopic sympathectomy is effective for palmar hyperhidrosis but because of side effects and risks, is reserved for the most severely affected individuals.

At Tristram Clinic, axillary hyperhidrosis is successfully treated with botulinum toxin. It is injected into the skin of both armpits without any need for local anaesthetic. This procedure is a walk in, walk out procedure that consists of small, multiple injections in a grid-like pattern over the

chaffing, dermatitis and infections. One patient reported that he could now wear white shirts without leaving yellow underarm stains. He used to dread summer functions because he was too embarrassed to lift his arms up, but now he can safely remove his jacket.

Make an appointment with one of our appearance medicine nurses at Tristram Clinic to find out more. If necessary, they can arrange an appointment with a dermatologist, vascular surgeon or plastic surgeon for assessment.

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