

What is hyperhidrosis?

Hyperhidrosis is a condition in which a person experiences excessive sweating in the face, palms, underarms and feet. According to the area that it affects, hyperhidrosis is categorized into facial hyperhidrosis, palmar hyperhidrosis, axillary hyperhidrosis and plantar hyperhidrosis respectively. In one form or another it affects nearly 3% of the American population.

What causes hyperhidrosis?

While the root cause of hyperhidrosis is unknown, it has been established that it is caused when the sympathetic nervous system which stimulates sweat production goes into overdrive and causes the sweat glands to produce more sweat than is required to keep the body cool. Some research studies show that hyperhidrosis is a genetic condition while others link it to emotional stress.

Whatever form it takes, hyperhidrosis causes tremendous emotional, social and professional embarrassment. For example, a person afflicted by the problem of severe underarm sweating is constantly worried about such side effects as stained clothes and body odor.

Can hyperhidrosis be treated?

Yes. Increasingly there are a number of available options to treat if not permanently cure hyperhidrosis. These options range from topical applications and oral medication to surgery and alternative remedies.

What are the current treatments for hyperhidrosis?

The most popular methods to treat hyperhidrosis are:

- Botox® injections: interrupting the signal from the sympathetic nervous system to the sweat glands
- Topical treatments: applying chemical antiperspirants like aluminum chloride
- Oral medications: treating the underlying conditions
- Surgery: surgically clipping or interfering with the nerves that cause excessive sweating

Are the treatments permanent?

Non-surgical treatments for hyperhidrosis such as many of the ones described above usually have a short-lived effect. Though surgery has relatively long-term impact, it involves certain side effects that may not agree with all patients. One of these is compensatory sweating, which occurs when other parts of the body attempt to make up for the lack of perspiration in the area affected by the surgery. This typically affects 50-60% of surgical patients. One of the most effective, longer lasting FDA-approved treatments for hyperhidrosis is Botox® injections.

How is Botox® used to treat hyperhidrosis?

Botox® is injected into the underarm area where excessive sweating occurs and stops sweating by temporarily blocking the nerve endings in that area and thus decreasing the transmission to the sweat glands.

When will Botox® take effect?

Underarm sweating typically decreases by 90% within 48 hours and full effect will be seen within one week. There may also be a simultaneous disappearance of odor associated with decreased sweating.

How long does Botox® last?

The effect of a Botox® injection typically lasts 3-8 months, after which a repeat injection needs to be administered.

What are the risks and complications?

Complications from injection into the axillary skin may include tiny bruises which fade in a few days and small persistent areas of sweating that may require a second treatment.