

## Excessive Sweating

When the body temperature rises, sweat is produced and this has a cooling effect through evaporation. The average adult can produce up to half a litre of sweat per hour; however a trained athlete can produce up to 3-4 litres of sweat per hour.

Excessive sweating affects many individuals, who either suffer quietly or are detected by people next to them, who in turn generally find it difficult to inform the affected individual.

1. **How common is the problem?** Up to 3% of the US population is affected and this may be much more prevalent here, due to our tropical climate.
2. **Does sweat smell?** Sweat is odourless. However bacteria can break down sweat from apocrine glands, which are mainly found in the armpits. This then produces a repulsive smell.
3. **Where and when does excessive sweating occur?** The most commonly affected areas of the body are the palms, soles and the armpits. An important fact is that excessive sweating occurs only when the individual is awake and stops during sleep.
4. **Why does one sweat excessively?** Up to 80% of affected individuals have a family member with a similar problem. Whilst most are healthy, a cause can be found in a minority of individuals.

Diseases like Diabetes, Thyroid and other hormonal disturbances can increase sweating. Some people with Infections like Tuberculosis and with certain rare cancers can also suffer from the above problems. Many medications have been implicated and the most common ones are anti-diabetics and anti-depressants.

5. **What are the available treatments?**
  - a) Use of roll-ons containing Aluminium Chloride salts can be of great help to some people.
  - b) Iontophoresis: This is a simple procedure, whereby an apparatus is used that passes a small current in the affected area. When performed regularly, this blocks the release of sweat.
  - c) Botulinum toxin A injections can produce good results. However proper anaesthesia should be given and the procedure needs to be repeated 4-6 monthly.
  - d) Certain oral medications may help a minority of individuals. E.g. Clonidine and Clonazepam.
  - e) When everything else fails, the last resort is to surgically excise the problematic area and grafting. This procedure usually leaves a lot of scarring.
  - f) Sympathectomy is another procedure which is rarely performed nowadays. It entails the removal of the nerves that stimulate the sweat glands and is very complex. Patients need to consult their Dermatologist to make an accurate diagnosis and exclude external causes.

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