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## DON'T SWEAT IT

BY ALEXANDRA LUCCHESI 42

### INNOVATIVE TREATMENTS FOR HYPERHIDROSIS WON'T HAVE YOU RUNNING TO HIDE.

At some point, we have all lamented over the fear of sweat. Whether it's a shiny complexion post-workout, clammy hands and feet, or underarm sweat, we all hope no embarrassing marks or odours will ruin a perfect evening.

For some of us, there's the severe case of sweating—hyperhidrosis—that faces our fears head-on. Hyperhidrosis is a condition that causes abnormal sweating and perspiration. Diagnosed by a physical examination, an iodine-starch reaction helps to identify areas with excessive sweat production. According to Dr. Anatoli Freiman, dermatologist at the Toronto Dermatology Centre, it's more unbearable than we may imagine.

"Primary hyperhidrosis may affect a person's quality of life, interfering with work and social activities," said Dr. Freiman. "It causes emotional embarrassment and isolates people, and it is psychologically unsettling and may be associated with depression and anxiety. Also physically debilitating, it may cause discomfort and skin irritation, which can lead to bacterial and fungal infections."

These effects can have us running for cover, trying to avoid any confrontation for fear of the anxiety that follows. Women have lamented over changing their shirts multiple times a day, replacing rotting shoes monthly, and hiding their hands, almost avoiding interaction entirely.

However, in recent years, treatments have become available for this condition, settling the dread and putting patients at ease.

Antiperspirants – Available by prescription and non-prescription, these topical sprays, gels, roll-ons, and lotions decrease sweating. The most common ingredient is aluminum chloride hexahydrate.

Antiperspirants should be applied at bedtime on dry skin, covering the hair-bearing areas of the underarm (axillae) and washed off in the morning. Drysol and Hydrosal are particularly effective.

Iontophoresis, a treatment administered at home, is used to treat sweaty hands and feet, and requires the patient to immerse them in a shallow pan filled with water. A medical device sends a low-voltage current through the water. The timeline? Six to 10 treatments until sweating decreases. Repeat treatments are necessary to maintain results.

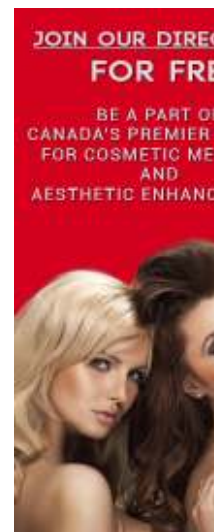
Botulinum toxin (Botox)—a popular treatment for facial wrinkles—is injected by a dermatologist into the underarms, palms, or soles with a diluted concentration, blocking the release of a neurotransmitter (acetylcholine). Effective for four to 12 months, patients are mostly very pleased with the results. Botox has been used worldwide for more than 20 years, and many clinical studies support its safety and efficacy.

Oral medication options include Ditropan or Robinul, used to completely prevent that stimulation of sweat glands, blocking "cholinergic" receptors in the glands and other areas of the body. Another option is Beta blockers (propranolol). All medication may have side effects, so it's best to weigh the pros and cons.

Sympathectomy interrupts the autonomic nervous system impulses to sweat glands. Possible side effects include compensatory sweating, creating excessive sweating in areas that haven't been treated; these can occur in up to 80 per cent of patients. All patients should be fully educated on the benefits and risks of this procedure.

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