

HYPERHIDROSIS

About Hyperhidrosis

Overview

Sweating is necessary to control body temperature during times of exercise and in warm/hot surroundings. Sweating is regulated by the sympathetic nervous system. In up to 1.0% of the population, this system is revved-up and works at a very high level, causing sweating to occur at inappropriate times in specific areas of the body. This condition is known as hyperhidrosis.

Symptoms

Hyperhidrosis can occur in many different areas of the body. Most commonly, hyperhidrosis appears on the palms. In this case it is known as Palmer hyperhidrosis. However the condition isn't just limited to the hands as Hyperhidrosis is also a problem on the soles of the feet (Planter hyperhidrosis) the armpits (axillae), the face, the head, the groin and the back.

Regardless of where it is located, hyperhidrosis presents an embarrassing problem to those afflicted with it. Shaking hands becomes uncomfortable, making business and day-to-day life a problem. Patients report that they are even embarrassed to hold the hands of those they love.

Hyperhidrosis is not a temporary condition. Many people who suffer from it have suffered for many years, usually from adolescence. Hot or cold, the sweating is constant.

Causes

While doctors don't know why hyperhidrosis starts, they have successfully linked it to over activity in the sympathetic nervous system. Specifically, it is the Thoracic Sympathetic Ganglion Chain, which runs along the vertebra of the spine inside the chest cavity.

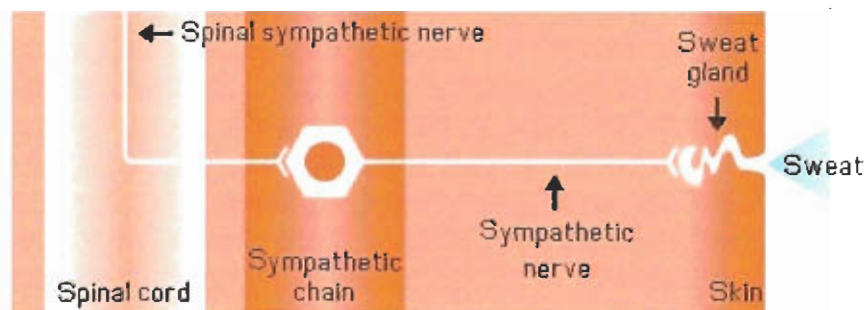


Diagram courtesy of Mr Mark Whitely

This chain controls the glands, known as the apocrine and eccrine glands, responsible for perspiration throughout the entire body. Depending on which part of the chain becomes overactive, different parts of the body become affected.

Sometimes people will sweat excessively because of other illnesses such as hyperthyroidism, psychiatric disorders, menopause and obesity. These causes must first be ruled out before Primary Hyperhidrosis can be diagnosed.

Treatment of Hyperhidrosis

Doctors have long tried to deal with this problem. Until now, no plan of action has produced any completely satisfactory results.

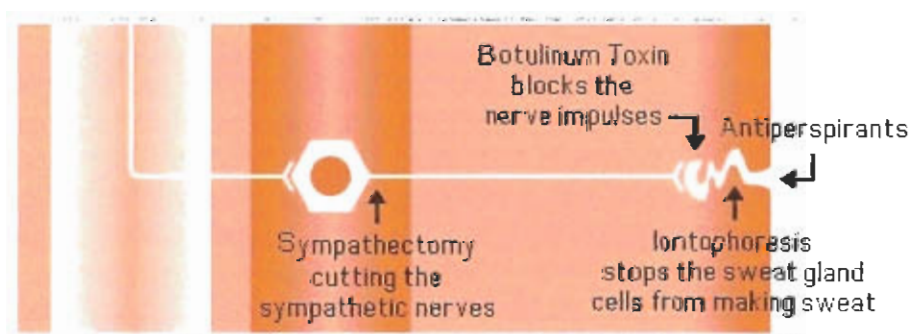


Diagram courtesy of Mr Mark Whitely

Solutions in the past have included everything from psychotherapy

to heavy applications of antiperspirants. Psychotherapy usually did not help the medical condition and proved too many, to be a heavy burden. Antiperspirants caused the same hardship. In order to work, they needed to be applied both regularly and liberally, making going through the average day quite a hassle. Drugs, such as psychotropic (sedative) and anticholinergic (atropine, robinul) medicines looked promising for a while. Unfortunately, these drugs presented risky and unnecessary side effects, such as dry mouth, urinary problems and even increased risk of heat stroke.

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