



TOO MUCH SWEAT!

MOST PEOPLE PERSPIRE IN SINGAPORE'S HEAT, BUT SOME SUFFER FROM A LEVEL THAT IS EMBARRASSINGLY EXCESSIVE COMPARED TO OTHERS.

There are many reasons why some people sweat excessively. Among them are medical problems such as chronic infection, overactive thyroid and reaction to medication (secondary hyperhidrosis). Sometimes, there are no identifiable underlying causes (primary hyperhidrosis). In these cases, excessive sweating begins when the person is below the age of 30. The condition runs in the family, is usually bilateral or symmetrical, and ceases during sleep.

Excessive sweating is a common ailment and can affect several parts of the body. Our palms and soles have the highest density of sweat glands, followed by the scalp, underarms and groin. In a Japanese study, 5.33% of the surveyed population has primary hyperhidrosis of the palms, 2.79% of the soles, 5.75% of the underarms and 4.7% of the head.

RISK FACTORS

Excessive sweating may be caused and aggravated by a combination of genetics and

situational, lifestyle and medical factors:

- Family history of primary hyperhidrosis
- Gender (males are 20% more likely to develop primary hyperhidrosis of palms and soles, while females are more likely to develop primary hyperhidrosis of underarms. Menopause also increases the risk of late-onset hyperhidrosis in women)
- Anxiety
- Physical activity
- Infection
- Heat and humidity

(environmental conditions, synthetic garment materials)

- Oral medication (such as antidepressants)
- Catabolic states (overactive thyroid, malignancies)

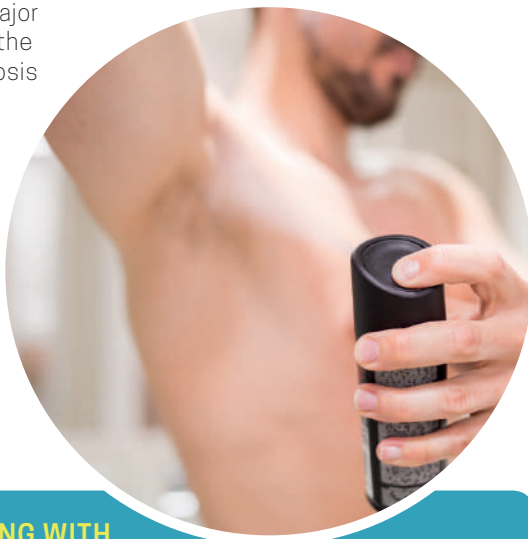
NO NEED TO SUFFER IN SILENCE

Individuals with skin problems (such as eczema) may experience sweat-aggravated flare ups of eczema at the underarms, hands or feet. Sweaty palms and soles also predispose people to viral warts or pits in the soles due to bacterial infection.

At the same time, excessive sweating causes major embarrassment to the sufferer. Hyperhidrosis in the underarms is often accompanied by an unpleasant odour while wet patches limit a person's choice of clothing. Sweaty feet are associated with foot odour due to bacterial action on sweat and dead skin; cold, clammy

hands may be a disadvantage when meeting new clients and may also impair function — wet palms can result in poor grip and ink smudges.

If the condition or odour bothers you, consult a dermatologist, who will be able to help you. Main treatment options include topical medications, iontophoresis, non-to-minimally invasive procedures (such as botulinum toxin injections and miraDry™ microwave destruction of sweat glands in the underarms) and surgery (sympathectomy, excision of sweat glands).



TIPS FOR LIVING WITH EXCESSIVE SWEATING

- Apply antiperspirant at bedtime and re-apply in the morning if needed
- Use antibacterial (deodorant, antibacterial shoe powder, antibacterial wash) to eliminate odour
- Use ballpoint pens to avoid smudging
- Wipe hands on sides of trousers or skirt before shaking hands
- Adopt postures that allow airing of underarms
- Wear clothes made from natural absorbent materials such as cotton, bamboo and linen, as well as open-toe sandals or shoes made from canvas or leather (rather than synthetic or rubberised materials that obstruct evaporation of sweat)
- Stay in an airconditioned environment where possible. In cold climates, wear a sleeveless vest instead of layering long-sleeved tops to avoid overheating

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With more than 20 years' medical experience, the multilingual Dr Wong Su-Ni is a dermatologist whose subspecialty areas of interest include psoriasis, acne, eczema and aesthetics.

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