

Excess sweating - hyperhidrosis

Sweating is one of the most important ways in which the body loses heat.

We sweat more after exercise, increased alcohol, coffee, tea or spicy foods, smoking, and when anxious or stressed. This is usually uncontrolled and not socially or personally convenient.

What is hyperhidrosis?

Hyperhidrosis means excessive sweating. People with hyperhidrosis produce sweat in amounts far greater than needed to control their temperature, to the extent that they may have to change their clothes and wash several times a day. They feel socially embarrassed.

Hyperhidrosis may primarily affect the armpits, the palms of the hands or the soles of the feet. We most commonly treat excess armpit sweating.

Antiperspirants are a first-line treatment but for a more long-lasting result and if these don't control the problem, Botulinum toxin injections may be used.

Botulinum toxin (Botox ® is the one I tend to use) used medicinally is a synthetic highly purified protein which blocks signals to sweat glands. The Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has licensed this drug for cosmetic use and for the treatment of excessive sweating.

What are the advantages?

Botox ® is very efficient at reducing excessive armpit sweating. Several days after treatment there is a significant reduction in the amount of sweating that will generally last between 3 to 5 months. The injections can be repeated as necessary.

How does the treatment work?

Small amounts of Botox® are injected into the armpit skin in an outpatient setting. It is not the most comfortable procedure, but no anaesthetic is required. When injected into the skin, Botox® blocks the actions of the nerves that supply the sweat glands, this prevents the glands from producing sweat.

How long does a treatment last?

The effects of treatment last for several months (usually 3 to 5) but eventually they will wear off. This is because the body eliminates it after a few months.

Are there any side effects?

The needles used are very fine to minimize the discomfort during the injections. Mild swelling or redness may occur in the treated areas, Some patients complain of temporary increased sweating elsewhere on the body.