

Hyperhidrosis

WHAT IS HYPERHIDROSIS?

Hyperhidrosis is a medical condition that results in sweating that exceeds the normal amount required by the body to maintain a consistent temperature. It is estimated that about 300,000 Canadians are severely affected by the condition.¹ Patients with hyperhidrosis produce up to five times the average volume of sweat.² This type of excessive and uncontrolled sweating can occur in various parts of the body, including the underarms (axillary hyperhidrosis), palms of hands (palmar hyperhidrosis), the face (facial hyperhidrosis), or the feet (plantar hyperhidrosis).³

WHAT CAUSES HYPERHIDROSIS?

Hyperhidrosis is a chronic condition, which is thought to be caused by an overproduction of a specific neurotransmitter in the sympathetic nervous system. It can also be the result of sweat glands that overreact to normal levels of the neurotransmitter.⁴ In either case, the excessive sweating can have a huge impact on the quality of life of patients, often impacting relationships, career choices and mental well-being.

HOW IS HYPERHIDROSIS TREATED?

There are a variety of treatment options available to hyperhidrosis patients including:

- Iontophoresis procedure, where a water bath is used to conduct mild electrical current through the skin's surface from an electronic device;
- Endoscopic thoracic sympathectomy (or ETS surgery), which interrupts the transmission of nerve signals from the spinal column to sweat glands, in turn preventing the sweat glands from being "turned on"; and
- High-strength antiperspirants, which work by blocking or plugging the sweat ducts.⁵

When antiperspirants are ineffective and the patient would like a less invasive treatment, BOTOX[®] (botulinum toxin type A) may also be used.

BOTOX[®] was approved by Health Canada for the treatment of axillary hyperhidrosis in patients 18 years of age and older in August 2001.⁶ BOTOX[®] therapy involves the injection of small therapeutic doses of purified botulinum toxin protein directly into the axillary area of severe sweating. Derived from the bacterium *Clostridium botulinum*, BOTOX[®] inhibits the release of a neurotransmitter,

acetylcholine, from nerve cells, blocking the signals that stimulate the eccrine glands to produce sweat. The effect is temporary and the treatment needs to be re-administered approximately every seven months, depending on the individual patient. Patients should speak to a physician to fully understand their treatment options.

- 30 -

For more information, please contact:

Jacqueline Zonneville
NATIONAL Public Relations
jjonneville@national.ca
416-848-1398

REFERENCES:

- ¹ Canadian Dermatology Association. Hyperhidrosis (excessive sweating). Available at http://www.dermatology.ca/patients_public/info_patients/hyperhidrosis/index.html. Accessed January 2010.
- ² International Hyperhidrosis Society. About Hyperhidrosis: Definition of Hyperhidrosis. Available at: http://www.sweathelp.org/English/PFF_Hyperhidrosis_Definition.asp . Accessed February 2010.
- ³ International Hyperhidrosis Society. About Hyperhidrosis: Understanding Hyperhidrosis. Available at: http://www.sweathelp.org/English/PFF_Hyperhidrosis_Understanding.asp . Accessed February 2010.
- ⁴ International Hyperhidrosis Society. Sweating bullets: Hyperhidrosis Fact sheet. Available at: www.sweathelp.org/pdf/SweatingBullets.pdf . Accessed February 2010.
- ⁵ International Hyperhidrosis Society. Hyperhidrosis Treatments Overview. Available at: http://www.sweathelp.org/English/PFF_Treatment_Overview.asp . Accessed February 2010.
- ⁶ BOTOX[®] Canadian Product Monograph. Allergan Canada. 2008.