

Sweaty feet

Advice for effective care



leading the way with care

Most people suffer from foot perspiration and odour from time to time, yet for some people sweaty feet are a persistent problem that can be embarrassing and uncomfortable.

Excessive sweating in feet is known as hyperhidrosis, and has a lot to do with how the sweat glands in this part of the body work. With 250,000 sweat glands, feet do tend to sweat more than other parts of the body.

But with a daily hygiene routine, few people should suffer from the embarrassment that it may cause.

Sweat glands in the feet

There are more sweat glands per inch in our feet than anywhere else in the body, and their function is to keep the skin moist and therefore supple. They secrete all the time, not just in response to heat or exercise as elsewhere in the body.

Possible causes

Sweaty feet can be caused by stress on the foot. This may be due to a structural problem, or because the foot is under strain or tired, for example, when you've been standing on your feet all day.

Hot weather can make matters worse, although sweaty feet can be a winter, as well as a summer problem. It can also be an inherited condition.

In adolescents, sweaty feet are probably caused by over-active sweat glands

triggered by changing hormonal levels in the body. Mental or emotional stress is a common cause as the sweat glands on the soles of the feet (and the palms of the hand) respond mostly to emotion. In some cases, the cause can be genetic.

What to do

Simple hygiene is usually effective in dealing with sweaty feet. Try following a daily foot hygiene routine:

- Wash in warm water with a mild soap-free body wash
- Dry well, particularly between the toes
- Wear clean hosiery daily, made of natural fibres (or more frequently if you have an excessive problem).

Do not use soap based products as these will make the condition worse. One or two potassium permanganate crystals obtained from a pharmacy can be added to a bowl of warm water to bathe feet. However, care must be taken as excessive use can turn the skin and nails brown, therefore use no more than once a week!

Footwear

Careful consideration of footwear and socks is essential. Well-fitting shoes made of leather, which allow your feet to 'breathe'.

As insoles or the uppers of shoes absorb a lot of sweat, don't wear the same pair every day, and allow them to dry out before wearing them again. Detachable

insoles are also a good idea. Socks that absorb moisture well, like wool, cotton, or wool/cotton mixture, will also help. Always wash your socks before using them again. The use of supportive inserts in the shoe can help reduce structural foot strain. Footwear with some form of fastener (lace, buckle or Velcro) and cushion 'neoprene' type sole will also help to reduce foot strain, and therefore perspiration.

Other problems

An added problem that often accompanies sweaty feet is foot odour. This is caused by bacteria on the skin breaking the sweat down, which releases an offensive smell. This is known as Bromidrosis.

This can usually be prevented with careful hygiene, or the use of medicated insoles, which can have a deodorising effect. Wash your feet daily with an antibacterial emollient such as Dermol 600 Bath Emollient and dry well afterwards. There is also a greater risk of minor skin infections, through athlete's foot or blisters.

Anti perspirants containing aluminium chloride are available over the counter. Surgical spirits dabbed on the skin daily can help (avoid cracks in skin). Anti fungal spray at night may also help.

do not

- Use sharp instruments such as razor blades to cut corns or hard skin
- Use corn paints/corn plasters which contain acid

- Use ingrowing toenail paints as these contain acid.

Treatment

For more serious long term cases, where normal foot care is not effective, your doctor may refer you for iontophoresis (electrical stimulation) and Botulinum toxin injections (botox).

Website: www.hyperhidrosisuk.org
Email: info@hyperhidrosisuk.org

Podiatry services
Cantley Health Centre
Middleham Road
Goodison Boulevard
Cantley
Doncaster
DN4 6ED

Tel 01302 379550

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Amharic

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Arabic

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Bengali

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Cantonese (traditional Chinese)

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Czech

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Farsi

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French

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une autre langue, veuillez contacter le service de conseils et liaison des patients [Patients Advice and
Liaison Service] au 0800 015 4334.

Kurdish Sorani

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Polish

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Punjabi

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Somali

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Turkish

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Urdu

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This information is correct at the time of publishing
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