

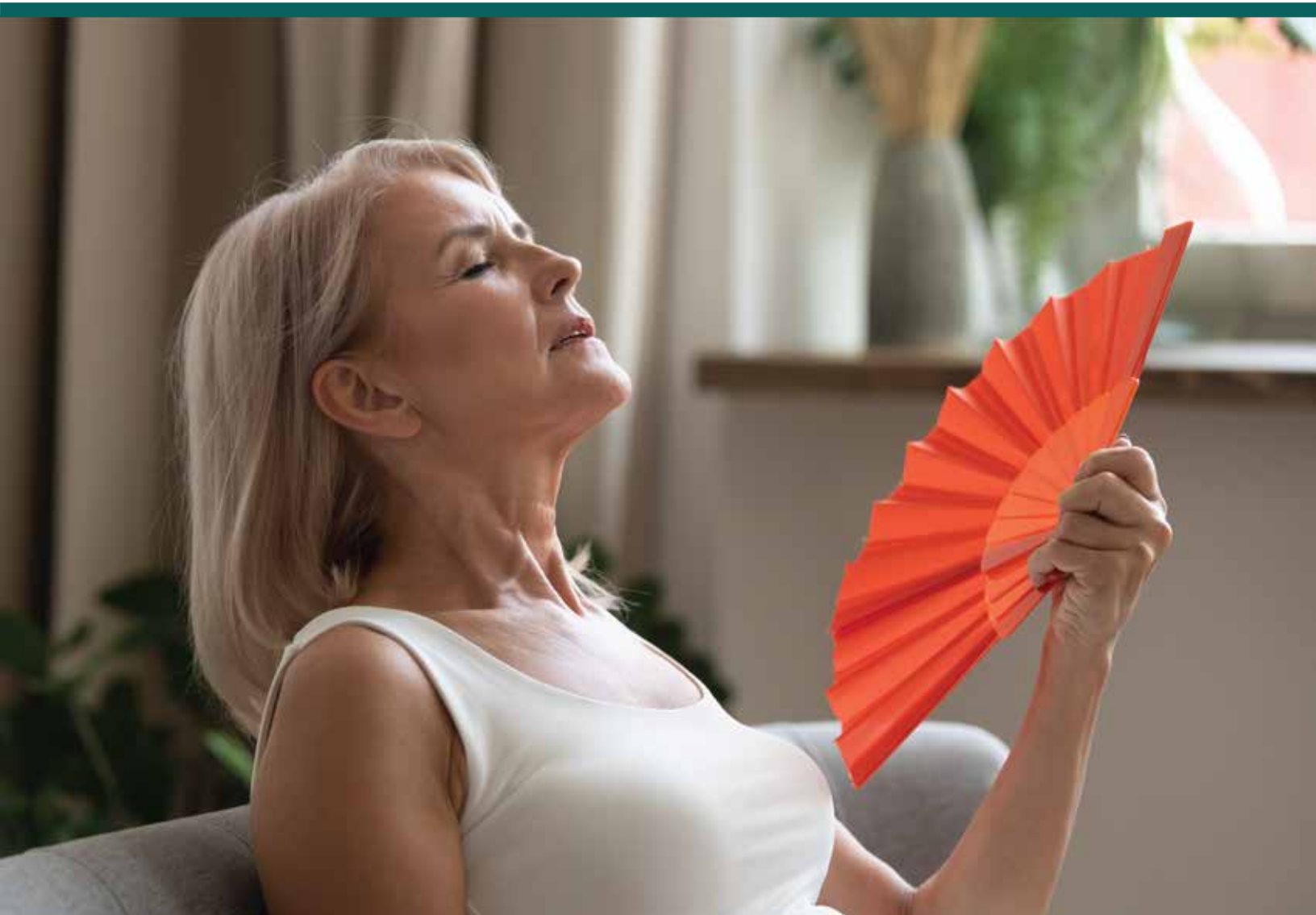
GLAMOUR

Is It Hot in Here?

How to Stop Sweating So Much, According to Dermatologists

Sweat stains? I don't know her.

By Danielle Sinay - August 4, 2023



Wondering how to stop sweating so much? You're not alone, even if excessive perspiration—and common side effects like night sweats, body acne, and thigh chafing—make you feel isolated.

I know because I've dealt with my fair share of unwanted sweat: I can't wear foundation in the heat without setting powder and spray (and sometimes I'm still lucky if makeup stays on), and I live and swear by antichafing creams (more on these below).

Furthermore, hyperhidrosis, which is the medical term for excessive sweating unrelated to heat, exercise, anxiety, or stress, affects about 15 million people daily in the US. Even without a hyperhidrosis diagnosis, sweating overall is a perfectly natural—and healthy—bodily function, and some people simply experience more of it than others, like me on my morning commute.

So, if you're anything like me, and perpetually wiping your face and back (and wherever else) after walking outdoors for extended periods of time, here's how I—and dermatologists—deal with excess sweat.

Why Am I Sweating So Much?

First, let's address why some people seem to sweat more than others. "Sweat is a normal reaction by our body to excrete toxins and regulate optimal body temperature in situations such as high heat, intense exercising, or acute stress," board-certified cosmetic dermatologist Michele Green, MD, tells Glamour, reiterating that sometimes, this reaction is simply stronger in certain individuals. "The sweat glands are signaled to turn off once the body is removed from the situation. This signal never occurs for some individuals, and the sweat glands continue to produce sweat."

As for why that is? "People sweat at different rates due to a combination of genetic factors and environmental influences," says Jody Alpert Levine, MD, board-certified dermatologist and director of dermatology at Plastic Surgery & Dermatology of NYC. "The number of sweat glands, their activity, and the response to stimuli can vary among individuals. Some people may have a higher number of sweat glands or more active glands, leading to increased sweating."

Other factors can play a role too, such as an overactive thyroid, anxiety, a genetic predisposition, neurological conditions, and medication side effects, adds Dr. Green. So no: It's not that you personally are doing anything wrong (except maybe sitting outside in the sun for too long).

When To See a Doctor For Sweating

All of that said, there are signs for when it's time to see a doctor for sweating. "If someone is experiencing excessive sweating that significantly affects their quality of life or if over-the-counter products have not been effective, they should consult a board-certified dermatologist," says Dr. Levine. "Signs that indicate a need for prescription-strength products include severe sweating that interferes with daily activities, no improvement with over-the-counter solutions, or excessive sweating during sleep."

A dermatologist can assess the severity of the sweating and recommend appropriate treatments, Dr. Levine adds, which may include prescription-strength antiperspirants or other therapies (which are discussed in depth below).

How To Stop Sweating So Much

While it's never someone's fault that they're sweating, per se, there are a handful of lifestyle changes, over-the-counter products, and in-office treatments and procedures that can help alleviate excessive sweating, ranging from moisture-wicking fabric to Botox for sweat.

Wear Light Colors And Moisture-Wicking Clothing.

In terms of lifestyle changes, Dr. Green suggests wearing light colors and fabrics (think whites and light pastels; not black or navy), as they reflect the sun's rays and therefore limit heat absorption and body temperature, as well as loose-fitting and moisture-wicking clothing. (My personal tip? Sport some ThighSociety cooling shorts under a skirt or dress.) This will not only help curb excess sweat but aid in preventing the risk of developing sweat-induced acne, skin chafing, and rashes.

Limit Consumption Of Spicy Foods And Caffeine.

Another option? Try limiting your intake of spicy foods and caffeine (I know, I'm sorry). "Spicy foods containing peppers contain a chemical called capsaicin that raises body temperature, causing your body to produce sweat, and excessive amounts of caffeine can affect your central nervous system, leading to induced sweating," Dr. Green explains. "Cutting back on spicy foods and caffeine can help decrease sweat production factors." This doesn't mean you have to cut them all out of course: I've simply switched to drinking decaf and matcha.

Take Frequent Showers.

It's also important to take frequent showers after workouts and spending time in hot environments, Dr. Green adds. "Sweat, dirt, and bacteria can all be trapped on the skin by sweaty clothes, leading to breakouts," she explains. "Using ingredients such as salicylic acid, benzoyl peroxide, and retinoids effectively addresses inflammatory acne, such as sweat acne, by removing dead skin cells and reducing sebum production." This doesn't necessarily stop the active sweating (unless you opt for a cold shower) but can help prevent the less-than-ideal side effects that can come with sweat.

My tried-and-true body washes? Cerave's SA Body Wash and Murad Acne Body Wash.

Products For Sweating

Antiperspirant Deodorant

"There are several over-the-counter products that can help control excessive sweating and provide relief from it, including antiperspirants," says Dr. Levine. "Brands like Secret Clinical Strength, Dove Clinical Protection, and Certain Dri are popular."

Something else to consider is what kind of deodorant you're using in particular. "When we think of sweat under our arms, many people turn to deodorants for relief," says Dr. Green. However, deodorants are designed to combat body odor, while antiperspirants work to decrease sweat production. It is essential to check that the deodorants you apply contain antiperspirant properties. Active ingredients such as aluminum chloride, aluminum chlorohydrate, and aluminum zirconium combine with sweat to form a gel on the skin, acting as a temporary plug to block sweat production."

Some specific product recommendations? "Vanicream Antiperspirant Deodorant is a stick deodorant containing 20% aluminum zirconium to prevent sweat production," she says.

Body Powder

Dr. Levine also recommends moisture-wicking body powders, such as Gold Bond Medicated Body Powder, which is a drugstore staple. My favorites? MegaBabe's Sweat Absorbing Body Powder (yes, the same brand who makes the iconic antichafing stick), and Kaia Naturals The Takesumi Detox The Sweat Powder.

Cooling And Antisweat Wipes

Another option, adds Dr. Levine, are cooling wipes. Stock up on those that contain aloe vera, witch hazel, or eucalyptus for their cooling and calming properties.

There are also wipes formulated to combat sweat production, adds Dr. Green. "Sweat Block Antiperspirant is an excellent wipe with 14% aluminum chloride to decrease sweat production for up to seven days," she says. Duradry and Lume also make super-effective, and convenient, body wipes you can keep in your bag for low-key sweat-proofing your whole body throughout the day.

Antisweat Creams And Balms

To prevent thigh-chafing and keep the rest of your body dry, Dr. Green suggests products from Body Glide and Carpe. "Body Glide is an excellent line of topical antiperspirants that can be used on other body areas, such as between the thighs and groin areas, and Carpe contains a line of hand creams, antiperspirants, and foot creams to treat hyperhidrosis," she says.

I can confirm: I credit Carpe's breast and thigh lotions with getting me through quite a few outdoor concerts in the summer.

Beauty Antisweat Products

While this is primarily a medical story, my inner beauty editor simply couldn't leave you without some makeup and hair-saving suggestions too. Danessa Myricks's Beauty Yummy Skin Blurring Balm Powder primes and absorbs excess moisture from the skin throughout the day, and it's so good my makeup stayed intact after completing an hours-long hike in the summertime.

Another essential? Setting powder. Laura Mercier's Translucent Loose Setting Powder has never led me or my makeup astray, helping to absorb moisture and mattify your complexion.

Treatments For Sweating

Finally, if lifestyle changes and OTC products aren't making a difference, you and your doctor might want to consider medical intervention. Some of these options include prescription antiperspirants and deodorants that contain higher concentrations of aluminum chloride, Botox injections for sweat, laser therapy which can be used to reduce the amount of sweat glands in an area, and MiraDry, says Dr. Levine. "MiraDry is the first and only FDA-cleared procedure to permanently reduce excessive sweat and odor," she says. "It uses thermal energy to target sweat glands, odor glands, and hair follicles. Only one or two treatments are needed for permanent correction."

Other options include Qbrexza, which is an FDA-approved topical anticholinergic cloth that blocks the receptors responsible for excessive sweating, says Dr. Green, as well as Brella. "Brella is a new noninvasive treatment that uses alkali thermolysis (TAT) technology to target hyperhidrosis," she says. "The Brella sodium patch is applied to the underarms, relying on localized heat energy to decrease sweat production."

There are also medications prescribed for excessive sweat, such as oxybutynin, benztropine, and propantheline. "These work throughout throughout the body to limit overall sweating, but are not all FDA-approved for hyperhidrosis," says Dr. Green, who clarifies that it's essential to consult with your dermatologist to ensure these medications are suitable for your body. Furthermore, while these medications can be effective, they can cause side effects such as dry mouth and blurred vision.

Other options include benzodiazepines, which are prescribed only in cases of secondary hyperhidrosis from anxiety, and beta-blockers, the most common of which for hyperhidrosis is Propranolol, says Dr. Green.

The truth is, like most skin care, there is no one "right" way to combat excessive sweating. What works for me what might not work for you and vice versa. But I feel confident that after a little bit of trial and error, and maybe a lot of antiperspirant, you'll be happily sweating (less) in no time.