



MCT

An icky, sticky situation

Sweaty palms aren't just embarrassing; they are a health hazard. Here's all you need to know about the condition.

Dr AVINASH KATARA



Are you one of those people who doesn't like sweat and carry around tissues just to keep dabbing

yourself every time even a drop of perspiration appears? Well, being hygienic is all well and good but you must realise that sweating is an important function that helps control your body temperature and keeps it within the normal range. We sweat as a normal response to different forms of stress, for example, heat, exercise or emotional stress. However, like all things are best in moderation, so is sweat. And, besides body odour, sweat can cause several other discomforts, especially if you have a case of sweaty palms.

The condition of sweaty palms is so rare that it only affects one per cent of the population, but, the fact is that it does affect people. As its occurrence is so rare, most people don't even realise they have the problem or if they do, they have no idea what to do to help themselves. Unfortunately, the causes of this are unknown but in 40 per cent cases, there is a genetic predisposition.

PHYSIOLOGICAL IMPACT

Excessive sweating is a nuisance to those who suffer from it, and

BENEFITS OF ETS

- ▶ Small scars.
- ▶ Better cosmesis.
- ▶ Reduced post-op pain.
- ▶ Shorter hospitalisation time.
- ▶ Quick recovery and return to normal life.
- ▶ Mild chances of recurrence (one to two per cent patients have had the problem of recurrence).
- ▶ Immediate and usually permanent results.

sweaty palms are the most incapacitating. Though the condition does not pose a serious threat to life; it can cause emotional and physical disabilities. Patients are not only uncomfortable all the time but very often, they are socially and professionally embarrassed by it as it gets in the way of shaking hands with someone, writing, typing and most everyday tasks. The problem usually begins in childhood and gradually progresses during the teenage years and adulthood.

HOW TO BEAT IT

While several treatment options have been tried to cure sweaty palms like topical antiperspirants, oral medications, iontophoresis, botulinum toxin injection, etc., these only offer temporary relief and most have side effects when they are taken for long periods of time. Even treatments using acupuncture, biofeedback, anti-anxiety medicines and various herbal remedies have been tried but with limited or no success. The thing that revolutionised the treatment of sweaty palms however, is the process of Endoscopic Thoracic Sympathectomy (ETS), which is a small surgery.

ETS is a minimally invasive procedure that allows access to the sympathetic chain that lies deep within the chest. The sympathetic chain is selectively blocked at the point where it sends out nerve branches to the sweat glands in the palm. This surgery offers immediate

relief and most patients are discharged from the hospital the day after the surgery, and the effect is permanent. So far, ETS has been well accepted with good patient feedback about how it has improved the quality of their life. In fact, listed in the box are some benefits of undergoing ETS rather than trying the more

dated methods for curing sweaty palms.

The writer is a minimal access and general surgeon at Hinduja Hospital, Mumbai.

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