



Although excessive sweating may not seem like a serious problem, this condition can profoundly impact the quality of life of the people who suffer from it.

Hyperhidrosis, is a physical condition marked by uncontrollable excessive sweating. Hyperhidrosis often manifests as sweaty hands and palms, sweaty feet, underarm perspiration, and facial sweating. It can also be associated with moderate to severe facial blushing known as idiopathic craniofacial erythema.

Hyperhidrosis affects about 0.1 percent of the population, and is considered to be genetically inherited. Hyperhidrosis usually starts during adolescence, however, it can start anytime between infancy and adulthood.

Hyperhidrosis is a functional and socially disabling problem, which has no known etiology, but has been related to hyperactivity of the sympathetic nervous system. The sympathetic nervous system regulates sweating. In patients with hyperhidrosis, this system is revved-up and works at a very high level, causing excessive sweating to occur.

Many activities that stimulate the nervous system, such as strong smells, spicy foods, increased air temperatures, exercise, high emotional excitement, stress or nervousness may cause attacks of excessive sweating through sympathetic over-activity. The most common therapies for hyperhidrosis include lotions, antiperspirants, oral medications and biofeedback. Conservative

medical treatments such as these are often successful for patients with mild and moderate cases of hyperhidrosis.

Unfortunately, patients with the most severe symptoms rarely find that conservative medical treatment is sufficient to control their disorder.

It is known that a certain segment within the sympathetic chain, which is within the chest cavity, is responsible for the excessive sweating. Eliminating that segment, which is known as a sympathectomy, will cause cessation of the excessive sweating. Open sympathectomy through a chest incision, or through the back, with removal of a piece of rib was done for the last 50 years. It was not so popular among physicians and patients because of the extensive nature of the procedure as well as the long time it took to recover.

Now, a minimally invasive procedure to cure hyperhidrosis and facial blushing is available in Wilmington at Wilmington Surgical Associates, P.A. A new procedure known as thoracoscopic sympathectomy or endoscopic transthoracic sympathectomy (ETS) allows our surgeons to locate and cut the right portion of the sympathetic chain with only very small incisions - in fact, less than 1/4 inch on each side. Using a fiberoptic camera and small surgical instruments, the patients benefit from less discomfort and a faster recovery. Because it is an outpatient procedure, younger patients are now undergoing this surgical technique.

Excessive sweating can interfere with people's lives. Many people with hyperhidrosis and facial blushing feel socially disabled, and are not able to lead normal lives due to these conditions. Following the surgery, the burden and embarrassment of severe sweating and facial blushing vanishes.

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