

health



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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.

THE CONDITION IS SO RARE THAT PEOPLE DON'T EVEN REALISE THEY HAVE IT

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.

Myths about semen busted

Dr D. NARAYANA REDDY



Many people falsely believe that a 100 drops of blood

make one drop of semen. People believe that semen is the most concentrated, perfect and powerful substance. Hence, its preservation guarantees health and longevity.

When such people find themselves "losing their semen," they are emotionally distressed and experience a plethora of complaints including exhaustion, weakness, dryness of the body, emaciation, sunken eyes, palpitation, sleeplessness, etc. The resulting depression could even drive them to suicide.

But, what they don't realise is that there is no scientific basis to these beliefs. Whatever food we eat is broken down into simpler compounds by our digestive system. These components travel through the blood stream to different parts of the body to nourish them. When the prostate, testes and the seminal vesicles are properly nourished, they function adequately by secreting their glandular secretions.

When these secretions combine, semen is formed. Thus, it is obvious that there

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SEMEN FACTS

- ▶ The production of semen is an unending process except when there is an infection, injury or both.
- ▶ Semen cannot be stored in the body beyond a point; it is meant to be released.
- ▶ Semen's value is only for producing a child, nothing more.
- ▶ Semen and urine cannot mix unless there is a defect in the valve in the urogenital tract.

is no direct correlation between the quantity of semen and quantity of blood.

Similarly, what is passed along with urine is not semen but secretions of the urethral glands.

The writer is a sexologist. You can mail him at dr.narayana@deccanmail.com

Healthy Living

Looking good

While foods neither cause nor cure acne, eating a vitamin-rich diet helps your skin to be healthy.

Feeding your skin

• **Foods rich in vitamin A** (carrots, sweet potatoes, leafy greens are some examples) and vitamin E (leafy greens, nuts) are vital to skin health

• **B vitamins**, found in beans, whole grains, some meats and fish, are also essential

• **A dish similar to the one shown here**, containing mustard greens, kale, leeks and carrots topped with sunflower seeds, is loaded with skin-healthy vitamins



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