

Alive & sweaty

► The explanation for your perspiration

We've all been there. You're on a date, rocking your new Camilla and Marc frock and, damn it, you catch your reflection and see ugly wet patches under your arms. Sometimes, no matter how much antiperspirant you roll on before you run out the door, those soggy rings still soak their way through.

"Yes, it's annoying and can be embarrassing, but it is completely normal to sweat," says *WH* health expert and GP Dr Ginni Mansberg. "It's our body's way of maintaining body temperature (37°C) by cooling it down". When you get hot, your body sweats and the moisture evaporates and cools you down. Your emotions can also affect your millions of sweat glands, so when you're nervous or stressed you're likely to sweat more. Unfortunately, if you lost the function to sweat altogether you'd suffer heatstroke in hot weather.

While it's normal to get a bit sweaty, if it interferes with everyday life it could be more serious. "Excessive sweating (hyperhidrosis) is when it disrupts your daily life, like being unable to use a pen or the inability to handle objects as a result of slippery grip," says Sydney dermatologist Dr Adrian Lim. >>

250,000

The number of **sweat glands** in the average adult foot



It's estimated around five per cent of the population are affected by excessive sweating, and it normally occurs in the palms of the hands and soles of the feet.

Hyperhidrosis aside, there are some other sweaty quirks: some folk sweat more in one armpit than the other, and some of us only perspire on our face. "There's several million sweat glands scattered though the skin's surface and every one of these are capable of producing sweat," explains Dr Lim. "However the density of glands may be higher in some areas than others." For instance you may have a higher proportion of sweat glands on the soles of your feet or in your right armpit than other parts of your body.

Noticed yellowish circles on your clothes? This is the fatty acids and proteins your body's perspiring, mixed with antiperspirant. And it's not actually sweat that smells – it's the bacteria on your body that reeks.

GOT THE SWEATS?

For symptom relief, Dr Ginni Mansberg recommends:

1 Judicious use of antiperspirant – this decreases the glands from sweating (check the label because "deodorant" means it only masks the odour). Look for aluminium chloride as the key ingredient and keep reapplying every few hours, not just after your morning shower.

2 Use cornstarch powder to keep you extra dry. You can buy plain old cornstarch from any supermarket, or pick up any organic baby powder that contains cornstarch instead of talc. Dust it on areas that get the sweats.

3 Avoid foods that make you pong. Body odour is often related to what you eat, so steer clear of too much garlic or chilli. Hot and spicy foods also make you sweat more.

4 Wear cotton clothing, which helps your body breathe, and avoid artificial fibres like polyester. This can stick or cling to your skin, restricting airflow.

5 According to the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, some drugs, such as aspirin and some antidepressants, can make you sweat more. But see your doctor before stopping any prescription medication.

PARALYSE YOUR PITTS

A slightly more drastic solution to excessive sweating is Botox injections to block nerves that stimulate the sweat glands. Effects start within a week and can last up to 12 months, says Claire O'Mara, a registered nurse at Sydney's Shape Clinic and MediSpa. According to the *Australian Prescription Products Guide*, side effects can include "increased sweating in other areas of the body, headaches and pain at the injection site". Shots cost from \$750 to \$1500, depending on the severity of your problem.

EXCLUDING THE NASTIES

If you've never had excessive sweating before and it comes on suddenly and you feel generally unwell, see your GP to rule out hyperthyroidism or pheochromocytoma (tumour of the adrenal glands). A thorough examination and some blood tests would diagnose these conditions, but both are extremely rare. So don't sweat over it.

The best BO BASHERS

Driclor (\$14.39)

This extra-strong formula has a higher dose of aluminium chloride hexahydrate than regular antiperspirants. "Put it on at night over five days," says dermatologist Dr Adrian Lim. "It will slowly block the sweat ducts and prevent you from sweating as much." After five days, only use it once every third or fourth night for maintenance.



Sweax Underarm Liners (\$4.99 for a pack of 6)

Something a little different – disposable absorbent pad liners for underarms. They stick to your clothes and suck up sweat during the day.



J&J Baby Powder Cornstarch (\$3.99)

An alternative to wet, sticky roll-ons. Dust on throughout the day to wick away any extra moisture. Be careful with darker-coloured clothes though. Keep this one for your lights.



Stuff I love

What beauty editor Nicole Wright is digging this month



HOT LIPS

The sand of Piha Beach in New Zealand was the inspiration for Lancôme Colour Fever Gloss, \$48. Smother a layer of this over the top of a fiery red shade for lips that turn heads.



SOFT SKIN

I knew Stephanie Gilmore and I had more in common than a love of surfing. We both use Alba Botanica Hawaiian Cocoa Butter Hand & Body Lotion, \$13.96. A thick body balm that hydrates dry summer skin (and smoothes beach hair too).



SHINE-FREE

This time of year I battle the shiny T-zone. Hallelujah for Revlon's ColorStay Velvet Crème foundation, \$32.95, that really does stay put all day, mopping up oil breakouts with its flawless, matte coverage.

