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# Make It Stop: My Palms Are Way Too Sweaty

This isn't the fun kind of slip and slide.



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Everyone's palms sweat at some point or another. That's just human nature. Even so, people aren't usually stoked to have sweaty palms, especially when it seems like it's happening all the time. If you suspect your palms are doing *the* most, you might actually be right. While some level of sweat is a normal bodily function, there is actually a thing as perspiring too much.

Excessive sweating is medically known as hyperhidrosis, and it goes far beyond a little dampness. People with hyperhidrosis can sweat so much it drips off their hands or soaks through their clothes, which can then lead to social anxiety and embarrassment, according to the Mayo Clinic. They may even struggle to pick up a pen or turn a doorknob because their hands are so sweaty, according to the American Academy of Dermatology. If this description pretty much sums up your life, here's what you need to know about what's causing your sweaty palms, plus how to find relief.

## Hyperhidrosis comes in two forms—and one form can cause very, very sweaty palms.

With primary, or focal, hyperhidrosis, people have excessive sweating that's localized to one area of the body, often the palms or soles of the feet (known as palmoplantar hyperhidrosis), underarms, or face, according to the Mayo Clinic. This happens when the nerves that signal sweat glands are overactive—even when you're not overheated or exercising. "It usually has a genetic component, starts in childhood or young adulthood, and does not occur at night," **Gary Goldenberg, M.D.**, assistant clinical professor of dermatology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital, tells SELF.

Secondary hyperhidrosis, on the other hand, is hyperhidrosis that's caused by another medical condition, and it typically occurs all over a person's body. This could include diabetes, menopause, thyroid conditions, or even certain medications. "It usually starts in adulthood and [also] occurs at night," Dr. Goldenberg says.

There's no reliable data on how common hyperhidrosis is, but New York City dermatologist Doris Day, M.D., author of the upcoming book *Beyond Beautiful*, tells SELF that she sees patients with hyperhidrosis every day in her office. "More people have it than you realize," she says.

Unfortunately, hyperhidrosis can cause a significant amount of stress, which can start up a vicious cycle: You get anxious and sweat a lot, then you get more frazzled *because* of the sweat. Sweating, particularly with primary hyperhidrosis, can also be triggered by your central nervous system's fight or flight response—regardless of whether or not you actually feel anxious, Dr. Day says. So let's say you have to give a big stressful presentation, but you're actually feeling pretty good about it because you've prepared. Still, maybe you have a *tiny* flutter in your stomach, which your body could interpret as a signal that something stressful is about to happen, which can bring on the sweat.

### **Palms feeling swampy when you need them, well, not to be? There are a few things you can try in the moment.**

There's not much you can do to completely stop excessive palm sweat on your own, Dr. Day says, but you can try to handle it temporarily. You can apply hand sanitizer if you have it close by, since the alcohol base in it might help dry things up a little, she says. And, if you happen to be near a super-absorbent paper towel or toilet paper, you can press that between your palms to soak up excess sweat.

If stress is fueling your sweating, Dr. Day recommends trying to practice some mindfulness (though that can be easier said than done at the time). Try to acknowledge that, yes, you're sweating more than you'd like, but you're going to try to stay calm, wipe it up, and move past it, since worrying about sweating will often only make things worse.

### **If you're dealing with excess sweat all the time, check in with your doctor.**

There are various treatments doctors can employ to address sweaty palms and other symptoms of hyperhidrosis. To determine which kind of hyperhidrosis you have, your doctor may ask about your medical history and run labs or other tests to measure your sweating. Next step: figuring out a treatment plan. Like most medical conditions, hyperhidrosis is different for everyone, and what works for one person might not work for someone else. Still, there are some go-to remedies that doctors often use.

The first is a topical antiperspirant with aluminum chloride, which works well for some people with hyperhidrosis, Dr. Goldenberg says, explaining that these treatments plug sweat ducts, which release moisture, thereby decreasing perspiration. Using a topical antiperspirant is as simple as rolling it onto your palms and letting it sink in (be sure to read the product's specific instructions, since it may call for use before bed so there's adequate time for it to take effect before the daytime). Your doctor may also prescribe you anticholinergics, which work to decrease sweat production by blocking acetylcholine, a messenger in the nervous system, Dr. Goldenberg says. This tells the body to secrete less sweat.

Botox injections are also a common treatment for hyperhidrosis. A dermatologist will inject Botox into your palms to shut down the sweat glands' production, Dr. Day says. She typically only injects a person's dominant hand (like your right hand if you're right-handed), since this is the one that you'd use to shake hands and write with. "I find that the [less dominant] hand gets a little better when the [dominant one] sweats less," she says. While the physiological process here isn't totally clear, Dr. Day says it might come down to the power of your mind: If your right hand isn't sweaty anymore and you're not as anxious about hyperhidrosis, your left might get less sweaty over time. Botox's effects on hyperhidrosis can last up to six months before you have to go in for another round, Dr. Goldenberg says.

You can even have surgery to remove the sweat glands in your palms, but, as the AAD points out, there are some risks. "Very few of my patients choose this option," Dr. Goldenberg says.

Unfortunately, insurance coverage of these treatments really depends on your situation. Some plans consider hyperhidrosis a cosmetic issue and won't cover treatments, but most either fully or partially cover the cost of Botox injections and medications to treat this condition, Dr. Goldenberg says.

If you suspect that your palms sweat way too much, talking to a doctor about your options is your best bet. There are plenty out there that can help, and there's really no need to be embarrassed. As Dr. Day says, "You aren't the only one with this."