

**Perspiration keeps us from getting overheated, so sweating is good—up to a point.**





# Don't Sweat It!

## Homeopathic Medicine Helps Hyperhidrosis

by ROBERT J. SIGNORE, DO, DiHom

**H**ave you ever felt embarrassed when shaking hands with someone because your hands were dripping wet with sweat? Do you have to change your shirts several times in the same day because they're drenched with perspiration? If so, you are not alone. Approximately 3% of people suffer from excessive sweating, also known as hyperhidrosis.

Sweating is a normal physiologic function that is essential for survival and vital to maintaining the body's normal temperature evenly—a process called homeostasis. Apart from humans, only a few animals (e.g., apes, monkeys, and horses) can dissipate body heat through evaporation of sweat from eccrine sweat glands. The sympathetic nervous system regulates the function of these glands. Eccrine sweat glands are located all over the body; however, our underarms, palms, and soles have the most.



## Patients tell me how their excessive sweating has ruined numerous shirts and socks

medicine can be for hyperhidrosis is that there is a paucity of published reports in both the medical and lay press. With this article, I hope to increase awareness of the beneficial effect of homeopathic medicine in the treatment of hyperhidrosis.

### A damper on one's social life...

As a clinical dermatologist, I have seen many patients with this condition and know how much it can adversely affect them. They suffer embarrassment and decreased self-confidence. With the average age of onset from 14 to 20 years (young people in their formative years), hyperhidrosis can be especially detrimental to social, psychological, and physical well-being. Patients tell me how their excessive sweating has ruined numerous shirts and socks, or how it predisposes them to avoid social situations. Hyperhidrosis of the hands threatens their livelihoods by making it difficult to safely handle power tools, play musical instruments, or engage in other manual activities.

Most folks have tried aluminum-containing over-the-counter and prescription antiperspirants without benefit prior to seeing me. Some have tried iontophoresis devices that use an electrical current to shut off sweat glands, but these

are expensive, time consuming, and not always helpful. Injectable neurotoxins, such as Botox®, are often effective but must be repeated on a regular basis. In addition to their high cost, Botox® injections can be painful, especially on the palms and soles. Therefore, a safe, simple, inexpensive, pain-free, and highly effective treatment for hyperhidrosis such as homeopathic medicine would be greatly appreciated by both patients and their healthcare practitioners.

### Investigating homeopathy's effectiveness

As I began to discuss the treatment of excessive sweating with my homeopathic colleagues at the National Center for Homeopathy's annual Joint American Homeopathic Conferences and at home in the Chicago area, I found the general consensus was that hyperhidrosis can, in fact, improve with individualized homeopathic treatment. On this point everyone agreed. But, when I asked what percentage of hyperhidrosis patients treated with homeopathy got better, the answer was less clear. So, the research question I wished to answer was: "What percentage of hyperhidrosis patients treated with homeopathy get a meaningful improvement?" I defined

*(continued on page 22)*

Perspiration keeps us from getting overheated, so sweating is good—up to a point. But when people experience an overabundance of sweating, it can be quite unpleasant and decrease their quality of life. Many sufferers do not know that treatment is available. Even more people are unaware that homeopathic medicine can help their unwanted, excessive sweating. Early diagnosis and management of hyperhidrosis can significantly improve a person's quality of life, yet it is often undiagnosed, especially in children.

One reason that the general public does not know how helpful homeopathic

## Demographics and Results of Hyperhidrosis Patients Treated With Classical Homeopathic Medicine

Hyperhidrosis Case Series (n=9) R. Signore, DO

FAMILY HISTORY	LOCATION	DURATION (Y)	REMEDY	IMPROVE
1. No	Axillary, Palms, Soles	14	<i>Sulphur</i>	Yes
2. Yes	Axillary, Palms, Soles	9	<i>Ignatia</i>	Yes
3. Yes	Palms, Soles	11	<i>Sulphur</i>	Yes
4. No	Axillary, Trunk, Groin, Head	Many Years	<i>Sulphur</i>	Yes
5. Yes	Axillary, Palms	4	<i>Sulphur</i>	Yes
6. No	Palms, Soles	9	<i>Sulphur, Silica</i>	No
7. Yes	Palms, Soles	23	<i>Silica, Sulphur</i>	No
8. Yes	Axillary, Palms, Soles	3	<i>Sepia</i>	No
9. No	Axillary	1	<i>Natrum muriaticum</i>	Yes

# The Case of Dripping Hands and Soggy Socks

## ... and how homeopathy solved it

Beatrice\* was a pleasant and attractive high school senior. She described herself as an outgoing, friendly person who liked to “joke around and have fun” with her friends. She came to my dermatology office for help with excessive sweating of the feet, underarms, and especially the fingers and palms.

It had started in early grade school. She vividly recalled that her elementary school teacher was upset because the ink was often smeared on her homework papers. What her teacher didn't understand was that Beatrice had a medical condition that caused her hands to drip sweat as she wrote her school assignments. As Beatrice got older, her hyperhidrosis persisted and started to affect her underarms and feet as well. She remembered how embarrassed she felt and how awkward it was for her during social activities. Fortunately, she was extroverted, and she never let her excessive sweating keep her from participating in social events. But she always brought a hand towel with her wherever she went because she had to wipe her hands every several minutes throughout the day to keep them from dripping. Her underarm sweating was so bad that it prevented her from wearing colored blouses. Beatrice couldn't even walk barefoot at home without leaving puddles of sweat on the floor.

Her sweating was worse in a hot environment, worse with exercise, and worse when she was nervous. Her sweating improved with relaxing at home and also just before going to bed at night. Her sweat on the palms was warm to the touch. There was no odor with sweating and she noticed her perspiration mainly during the day. The only parts of her body that perspired during sleep at night were her feet.

Beatrice was warm-blooded and liked to have a fan blowing on her. She enjoyed spicy foods and loved to dine at Indian and Thai restaurants. She tended to have a great thirst for cold water. In addition to being an extrovert, she described herself as neat and tidy. While she disliked consolation and desired to be alone when upset, she denied any sun sensitivity.

### A remedy for Beatrice

As I studied Beatrice's case further, I thought more and more about the homeopathic remedy *Sulphur*. Boericke's *Homeopathic Materia Medica* describes *Sulphur* as Hahnemann's great anti-psoric remedy. *Sulphur* has a great affinity for the skin, where "...it produces heat and burning." *Sulphur* patients often have numerous skin complaints such as eczema, dryness, itching, and sweating. Boericke describes the *Sulphur* patient as having "...hot, sweaty hands" and "...sweat in armpits, smelling like garlic."

**Beatrice couldn't even walk barefoot at home without leaving puddles of sweat on the floor.**



On the basis of Beatrice's totality of symptoms, I prescribed *Sulphur* 30c—2 pellets by mouth twice per day. When she returned three weeks later, I immediately knew that she was better when I greeted her with a handshake. Instead of being wet and dripping, her hands were now only slightly moist. I estimated her hyperhidrosis had decreased by about 30% to 40%, and she concurred. I then prescribed a higher potency of *Sulphur*, now the 200c—2 pellets by mouth taken only once per week. For the first several days, she noticed being more thirsty, but this quickly resolved. Four weeks later, her sweating had now decreased by about 75% from her baseline and was within the normal range.

### No more sweat puddles!

When treating hyperhidrosis patients with homeopathic medicine, my approach is different than when they request conventional therapy. Rather than treating the hyperhidrosis *per se*, the goal is to treat the *person* who has the hyperhidrosis. So, in Beatrice's case, we treated her with homeopathic *Sulphur* because this remedy most closely fit her as a person! The results Beatrice obtained from classical homeopathic medicine were remarkable. She no longer suffered from constantly dripping fingers and palms. Additionally, she reported even being able to wear colored blouses and dresses without having to worry about noticeable wet marks. Finally, she happily stated that for the first time in many years she could walk barefoot at home without leaving puddles of sweat!

\*The individual's name and personally identifiable information have been changed to protect patient confidentiality.

**She brought a hand towel wherever she went because she had to wipe her hands every several minutes to keep them from dripping.**

## Excessive sweating predisposes them to avoid social situations.

meaningful improvement as: “A noticeable and clinically important reduction in sweating as observed by both the patient and the physician.”

In my dermatology practice over a period of 13 months, I prospectively treated nine patients with classical homeopathic medicine. This means that I took an extended patient history that inquires not only about my patients’ excessive sweating but also about their personalities, emotions, dietary and personal habits, and general physical characteristics. I then matched these unique patient characteristics with those of the best-matching remedies in a process called repertorization using Radar-10 software. Because hyperhidrosis tends to be a chronic disease, I tried to select each patient’s constitutional remedy, also known as their “chronic remedy.”

The duration of the patients’ hyperhidrosis ranged from just one year all the way up to 23 years prior to receiving homeopathic treatment. Ages ranged from 17 to 71 years. Five were male and



four were female. Five of nine patients (56%) had one or more family members affected with hyperhidrosis.

### Excessive sweating reduced for most

We found that 6 out of 9 (67%) patients responded successfully to homeopathic treatment and achieved a meaningful improvement in their excessive sweating. We observed that hyperhidrosis typically responded within 3 to 4 weeks after beginning the correct remedy. Additionally, 6 out of 6 (100%) responders noticed improvement in other seemingly unrelated issues (anxiety, obsessive thoughts,

premenstrual cramps, fatigue, eczema, and dietary fat intolerance).

### Benefits for all

The remaining 3 of 9 (33%) hyperhidrosis patients did not achieve meaningful improvement. Two of the three non-responders had very mild hyperhidrosis at baseline. Although their hyperhidrosis did not respond, all three patients still noticed improvement of other medical issues during homeopathic treatment, including bromhidrosis\* of feet (foot odor with sweating), constipation, and menstrual cramps. This demonstrates one of the benefits of classical homeo-

## Many sufferers do not know that treatment is available.

pathic medicine—it addresses and benefits the whole person, and not just the patient's chief complaint.

### Medicines well tolerated

Among the six patients whose hyperhidrosis responded to treatment, four responded to *Sulphur*, one to *Ignatia*, and one to *Natrum muriaticum*. The homeopathic remedies were well tolerated. One patient reported he felt “lightheaded and tired” after beginning homeopathic *Ignatia* 200c—2 pellets by mouth three times per week. These symptoms completely resolved upon discontinuation of the remedy and restarting the same remedy at weekly intervals. Another patient developed transient constipation while taking the homeopathic remedy *Natrum muriaticum*, before we finally found the appropriate remedy that corrected his hyperhidrosis. In general, adverse effects from homeopathic medicines are usually mild and short-lived and respond to either a reduction in frequency/potency or discontinuation of the remedy.

### Positive results overall

In summary, we performed a prospective case series of nine hyperhidrosis

patients who were treated with classical homeopathic medicine. Six out of nine (67%) patients achieved a meaningful improvement in their hyperhidrosis. In addition to improvement of hyperhidrosis, all responders reported improvement of other medical issues including: anxiety, obsessive thoughts, premenstrual cramps, fatigue, eczema, and dietary fat intolerance. Similarly, all three patients whose hyperhidrosis did not respond to homeopathy also experienced benefits in other medical issues, including improvement in constipation, menstrual cramps, and foot odor. Homeopathic remedies were safe, well-tolerated, easy to administer, pleasant-tasting, and accepted well by the patients. One additional point is noteworthy—homeopathic medicines are very inexpensive when compared to conventional hyperhidrosis treatments.

In the future, formal studies comparing the efficacy, duration of improvement, and cost effectiveness of homeopathic treatment versus conventional treatment of hyperhidrosis would be helpful.

*\*Of note, the patient who had improvement of foul-smelling foot sweat responded to the remedy Silica 30c, 2 pellets twice a day.*

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# No Sweat!