

How our obsession with guzzling litres of water is making us SWEAT all the time: Problem is so bad that some people now want surgery on their armpits, doctor says

- Professor Mark Whiteley is one of the leading experts on hyperhidrosis
- This is a condition where people sweat excessively from one area
- In many cases they are simply drinking too much water, he said
- Says people should only drink when they are thirsty or they will sweat
- However, he recommends surgery for people with severe hyperhidrosis
- Stephanie Sloane, 25, was lasered after years of embarrassing sweating
- Says the procedure has left her 'free' to wear and go wherever she wants

By MADLEN DAVIES

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We're constantly told drinking plenty of water will lead to clear skin and an alert mind.

But experts now warn drinking too much fluid is unnecessary and could actually be harmful.

Not only can it lead to kidney problems, but it can also trigger something particularly embarrassing - excessive sweating.

Professor Mark Whiteley, a consultant vascular Surgeon at The Whiteley Clinic, London, is one of the leading experts in the condition, known medically as hyperhidrosis.

Hundreds of patients visit him each year suffering so badly they are considering surgery to remove their sweat glands.



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Experts now warn drinking eight glasses of water a day, as is recommended by the NHS, is unnecessary and could lead to problems like excessive sweating

But in many cases, they are simply drinking way too much fluid.

'In fact, the first and most important thing I ask them is how much water they consume,' he told MailOnline.

He said: 'Lots of advertisers advertise water, and say you have to drink two or three litres a day.

'That's medically incorrect.

'If you go to intensive care you will be put on 1.5 litres of fluid per 24 hours,' he explained.

'If a doctor came along and gave you 2 litres, you'd get heart failure and they'd be sacked.'

Around half a litre of fluid is metabolised from food every day, and most people drink tea and coffee on top of that intake.

'You don't need much extra,' Professor Whiteley said.

'If you drink more, your kidneys have to work extra hard to get rid of this fluid load.

'Then you sweat it out, which makes people sweat even more.

'There's this weird idea that if you're drinking too much and sweating, you need to drink more.

'People should be saying "Drink if you're thirsty". Urine should be yellowish, clear.'

His warning comes after a paper published in the British Medical Journal said NHS advice to drink six to eight glasses a day is 'not only nonsense, but thoroughly debunked nonsense'.

The paper's author, Dr Margaret McCartney, a Glasgow-based GP, said that the benefits of the drink are often exaggerated by 'organisations with vested interests' such as bottled water brands.

Dr McCartney also pointed out that research shows drinking when not thirsty can impair concentration, rather than boost it, and separate evidence suggests that chemicals used for disinfection found in bottled water could be bad for your health.

Drinking excessive amounts can also lead to loss of sleep as people have to get up in the night to go to the toilet, and other studies show it can even cause kidney damage, instead of preventing it.

Worryingly, Dr McCartney also warns that taking on too much water can lead to a rare but potentially fatal condition called hyponatraemia, which sees the body's salt levels drop and can lead to swelling of the brain.

However, Professor Whiteley says there are people who suffer from hyperhidrosis which is not linked to their fluid intake, who will require treatment beyond cutting down on liquids.

It is normal to sweat in heat when exercising, or in stressful situations, he said.

Usually people in these situations sweat all over the body.

But some people are 'wired differently' meaning they sweat the same volume, but it is concentrated in one area, usually the armpits or the groin, Professor Whiteley explained.

They may also experience sweating in situations when most people wouldn't, such as watching television or walking down the street.

'That's socially very embarrassing, and so they seek treatment,' he said.

Hyperhidrosis affects men and women equally, he said, although women find it more of a problem.

It can be caused by stress, a high-protein diet, or some people might react to over the counter medicines and begin to sweat in a certain area of their body.

Professor Whiteley says he advises cutting fluid intake, trying to relax and reduce stress, stopping any over the counter medication that the person has started taking recently and using spray or roll on deodorants for the problem.

If all of these avenues have been exhausted, and the person still has a problem with sweating, he will suggest a treatment such as Botox injections to the armpits, which temporarily stop the sweat glands producing sweat.

For the most severe cases, he recommends Laser Sweat Ablation surgery, which removes most of the sweat glands completely.

WHAT IS HYPERHIDROSIS?

Hyperhidrosis is a common condition where a person sweats excessively, and much more than the body needs to regulate its temperature.

Excessive sweating doesn't usually pose a serious threat to a person's health, but it can be embarrassing and distressing.

The inconvenience of it can also have a negative impact on quality of life.

There is no set way of defining excessive sweating, but if sweating is interfering with daily life and normal activities, a person may be diagnosed with hyperhidrosis.

Many people with the condition are too embarrassed to seek medical help or believe that nothing can be done to improve their symptoms.

Excessive sweating can be challenging to treat and it may take a while to find an appropriate treatment.

Doctors usually recommend starting with the least invasive treatment, such as anti-perspirants.

If this doesn't work, treatments such as medication to block the sweat glands and surgery will be considered.

Most people experience a significant improvement to their symptoms with time.

Source: NHS Choices



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Hyperhidrosis is a common condition where a person sweats excessively, and much more than the body needs to regulate its temperature. Professor Mark Whiteley, a leading expert on the condition, says the first and most important thing he asks patients is how much water they are drinking (file picture)

He says he turns down four out of five people who seek the Laser Sweat Ablation surgery, but for some people with severe hyperhidrosis, it can be an appropriate treatment.

He carries out around 75 Laser Sweat Ablation operations a year, charging £3,000 an operation.

'It's a terrific technique for people who cannot get relief any other way,' he said.

'We expect an 80 per cent reduction of sweating.'

He explains the procedure isn't seeking to stop sweating altogether, because the skin needs it.

Instead, its purpose is to return the person to a normal level of sweating.

During the op, one or two 3mm incisions are made on each side of the armpit.

After loosening the skin of the armpit, a laser is put inside the skin which destroys the sweat glands when it is fired.

Once destroyed, the sweat glands are removed by suction.

Professor Whiteley has developed and patented a special canula, a tube inserted into the body, that allows the laser to be fired at the right angle so the sweat glands are destroyed but the skin underneath is not burned.

The procedure is carried out in an hour under local anaesthetic, and is permanent when done properly, Professor Whiteley claims.

'The surgery - when it works properly - is permanent. You've destroyed the whole area so there's nothing there but scar tissue.'

However, he is open about the side effects of the procedure, which - as with all surgery - can include infection.

Other side effects include tight and lumpy skin, reduced hair growth and fluid collection or discolouration that normally only lasts for six weeks.

“Laser Sweat Ablation surgery is permanent when done properly. You've destroyed the sweat glands so there's nothing there but scar tissue”

'SWEATING MEANT I COULD ONLY WEAR BLACK CLOTHES,' SAYS WOMAN, 25, WHO HAD LASER SURGERY FOR HYPERHIDROSIS

For most people, choosing what to wear to the pub is not an arduous affair.

But one young woman suffered excessive sweating meaning she could only wear black clothes in certain materials, for fear of large sweat patches showing.

Stephanie Sloane, 25, from Manchester said her excessive sweating was a constant concern.

She began suffering from hyperhidrosis at 15, finding herself with large, moist patches under her arms from the minute she put on a T-shirt in the morning.

'I didn't sweat from my back, my head or the rest of my body; just my armpits,' she said.

'I'd get up in the morning and get changed. Five or ten minutes after putting the top on I got a sweat patch.

'The longer the time went on the bigger it would get. Then I'd forget about it and later on when I was walking down the street, my arm would brush against my skin and I'd feel it, glistening wet, under my arms.'

'One time I remember lying by a pool in Spain and I had trickles by my side. I was pouring out of me.'

She began wearing layers of dark clothing to hide the sweat patches, and washed herself in the day to help get rid of the sweat.

But wearing dark colours wasn't always enough to hide the patches.

She said: 'Another time I was wearing a coloured top, navy blue, to the pub.'

'I thought you wouldn't be able to see the sweat patches because it was darkly coloured, but you could.'

'I had to spend whole nights with my arms down my side.'

'It didn't smell, it was just high volumes of sweat.'

'It was embarrassing and disheartening.'



Stephanie Sloane, 25, from Manchester, suffered excessive sweating which left her with patches five minutes after she had put on a top in the morning



After years of wearing black, wearing layers and trying different deodorants to solve the problem, she decided to seek help. She tried Botox injections to her armpits, and opted for Laser Sweat Ablation surgery when the Botox stopped being effective

She believed it may be a phase, and tried different roll on deodorants specially designed to help people who excessively sweat, but nothing worked.

When she left university, she decided to get help, and spoke to her auntie who was a dermatologist, who suggested Botox injections.

Her GP confirmed there was a tablet she could take to stop the sweating, but Botox would probably be more effective, so she decided to go ahead with it.

'It was brilliant. It stopped it. But you need to keep having it, and by the fourth time I was resistant: it wasn't working.

'It's not a comfortable procedure - they inject your armpits. I thought "how long am I going to have to keep doing it?"'

She went online and found Laser Sweat Ablation treatment, which was well reviewed in forums where people with hyperhidrosis discuss different treatments.

The surgery itself was unpleasant, but not painful, she said.

'It was the strangest experience. They numbed the area with anaesthetic. They go in with a needle, and they're quite vigorous.

'I felt sharp stabbing pains and they put more anaesthetic, and it didn't hurt.

'But because I was awake, and I could see what they were doing, I could feel the sensation. There was no pain, but it was odd.'

But despite this, the surgery completely cured her hyperhidrosis and she now feels she is able to wear coloured clothes and go out or to work without worrying about sweating.

'Now it's amazing,' she said 'Now I just sweat in normal situations.

'They explained when I had it, it wouldn't stop me sweating altogether.

'I have had one or two occasions where I've had a sweat patch, but in a boiling hot situation. And that's normal.

'I can wear anything I want. I went on a big shopping spree when I finished.

'It's allowed me to be free.'



Though the surgery wasn't pleasant, Ms Sloane says it has given her a new sense of freedom