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STARRING
HOLLYWOOD'S
NEW IT GIRL

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SWEATY BETTY

Shouldn't every girl have the RIGHT to wear a silk blouse?

BY JOANA LOURENÇO

TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING Humans have anywhere from two to four million sweat glands spread over the body. These glands function to regulate the body's core temperature, cooling it down when it overheats. In some people, however, these glands become hyperactive, causing them to perspire excessively, a condition known as hyperhidrosis. "There are some people who just sweat more than their body needs to," says Dr. Nowell Solish, co-director of dermatological surgery at the University of Toronto and a founding board member of the International Hyperhidrosis Society. "If your sweating is affecting your daily living or interfering with your

social life, then you probably have excessive sweating." The causes are unknown, but researchers believe there may be a genetic component. According to Solish, at least two-thirds of sufferers have an immediate family member with the condition.

NO SWEAT There are several antiperspirants on the market that can help control sweating for the average >

MY PIT PROBLEM

Sweat is seriously cramping my style. Thanks to my overactive armpits, my clothing choices are limited to pieces that will hide the dreaded pit stains. I'm restricted to dark, saturated colours and certain fabrics, so pastels and silk are strictly verboten. Luckily for me, burgundy dominated the runways this season, but you won't catch me squeezing into Rodarte's heat-trapping leather-and-shearling shifts. Ditto the solid-coloured jumpsuits and satin blouses seen in various collections, which would look decidedly unladylike with dark underarm splotches. My closet's full of layering pieces, and even in the hottest weather, I won't leave the house without a cardigan to hide the inevitable rings of sweat. I've tried every clinical-strength antiperspirant on the market, with less-than-stellar results.

Over time, I've developed an arsenal of strategies to hide the evidence of my soggy skin. I've perfected the art of dancing with my arms at my sides. In public washrooms, I've mastered the technique of leaning over the hand dryer to dry my underarms while looking over my shoulder to watch the door. My hands get clammy too, so I always make sure that I have a cold drink in my hand as a cover-up for my wet handshake. ("It's the glass that's sweating, not my palms—honest!") I try to make light of my sticky situation—I melt at room temperature, like chocolate!—but it's a problem that causes me embarrassment and frustration.

I need a better solution than praying for the robot dance to make a comeback and nursing my ice water all night.

person. These antiperspirants contain sweat-stopping aluminum as their active ingredient, in varying concentrations—up to 25 percent in some clinical-strength formulas—which work by temporarily plugging sweat glands. But for those of us with excessive sweating, there's a more effective, longer-lasting solution. For more than a decade, doctors have been using Botox to treat patients for hyperhidrosis. The area that is most commonly treated is the underarms, but Botox can also be used to stop sweating in the hands, feet and forehead. Injected just under the skin, Botox acts to block the messages from the brain to the nerves that stimulate sweat. It's a temporary solution that lasts for six to seven months, on average, but can last as long as one year for some people. A chemical-free option: SaxtonChayse has a line of perspiration-shielding undershirts, called Tickled Pink, that come with triple-layer "pit pads" to absorb sweat.

THE NITTY-GRITTY I contacted Dr. Marc DuPéré, a board-certified plastic surgeon at Visage Clinic in Toronto, about the underarm Botox treatment. DuPéré starts by administering a starch test to see where I sweat the most. He coats my underarms with iodine and then sprinkles starch over the coated areas. The starch and iodine react with sweat to produce large dark-purple areas on my skin, turning my armpits into two large Rorschach blots. DuPéré takes a felt-tipped marker to outline the dark areas and then spreads a numbing cream made up of two topical anaesthetics

over the entire underarm area. Once the cream is absorbed, the actual procedure takes about five minutes per underarm and is relatively painless.

SHOW ME THE MONEY The price of a treatment depends on the amount of Botox required. According to DuPéré, women typically get about 50 units per underarm; men require 100 units. Each vial of 100 units costs around \$400. Many drug plans in Canada will cover the cost of the medication for the treatment of hyperhidrosis. There's an additional cost that doctors charge for the procedure, which averages about \$500.

FINAL COUNTDOWN Later on that night, I noticed some red mosquito-bite-like bumps on my skin and felt some soreness in the treated area. Two days later the bumps were gone, and after just five days I started noticing results. It's as if the leaky faucets that were my underarms had been shut off. Now, when my friends ask me if the procedure is working, I treat them to a round of fist-pumping à la Arsenio Hall. I no longer carry a cardigan around like a safety blanket, and get this: I bought a silk shirt in a pastel shade. Much to my relief, I didn't notice an increase in sweat production in other areas of my body. "Compensatory sweating from Botox is extremely rare," says DuPéré. "If it does happen, it won't be permanent."

It feels great not to sweat the everyday stuff. I'll raise an ice-cold glass to that. □

SWEAT STATS

- Hyperhidrosis affects an estimated 3 percent of the population. That's almost one million Canadians.
- Studies have shown that up to 70 percent of people with excessive sweating feel emotionally impaired by their sweating and 80 percent feel that it negatively impacts their work. Health Canada approved Botox for axillary (underarm) hyperhidrosis in September 2001.
- The majority of patients treated for axillary hyperhidrosis see an 80-percent reduction in sweat in the underarms.

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