

Botox for Your Underarms: The Basics

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Have a habit of perspiring through your silk tops? Don't sweat it — you're not alone.

Drug store deodorants and antiperspirants don't cut it for everyone. Hyperhidrosis — AKA unpredictable, excessive sweating — affects two to three percent of the U.S. population. Yet, according to the American Accreditation HealthCare Commission, less than 40 percent of those patients seek medical advice. The condition can cause significant discomfort, both physically and emotionally, and deserves a serious solution. We're talking: Botox.

Before you freak, understand that Botox has many uses. In the case of your underarms, we're not using it to plump your pits or prevent wrinkles, but rather, to reduce the amount of fluids your sweat glands release. The chemical that Botox inhibits for wrinkles is also involved in the release of sweat in the body. The procedure is nothing new to the market place and was FDA approved back in 2004, but due to the personal nature of the problem, it's not widely discussed.

We caught up with Dr. Paul Frank, Founder and Director of The Fifth Avenue Dermatology Surgery and Laser Center in New York City, to demystify the process and learn more about how it might help you.

First off, is underarm Botox a common procedure?

Very, I perform it several times a week in my practice and it only takes about 10 minutes.

Who's a good candidate?

Anyone with excessive sweating, and as a result faces social anxiety or physical discomfort.

How does it work?

A local injection into the underarm safely and reversibly stuns overactive sweat glands for up to six months. The Botulinum toxin inhibits the neurotransmitter acetylcholine, which is the substance that activates secretion from sweat glands.

Does it prevent BO too?

It doesn't help with odor, just sweating.

So can I still wear my normal deodorant?

Yes, deodorant will not have any affect on the procedure.

When do the results kick in?

Most patients see results in 2-4 days.

Does it hurt?

Pain is minimal and it is performed under topical anesthesia.

Does having laser hair removal affect the results?

No.

Are there any dangers?

None.

Sounds easy — what's the success rate?

It usually works great more than 90 percent of the time. For those who don't see results, invasive surgery is an alternative.

Can you tell us about that?

For patients with more severe forms of axillary hyperhidrosis or individuals who don't want the maintenance of Botox treatments several times a year, they can ask about Vaser Hyperhidrosis Therapy, a minimally-invasive surgical procedure that can be performed in-office under local anesthesia in an hour. Through a minuscule incision into the skin of the armpit, local anesthesia is first infused. Then, using the ultrasonic energy of the Vaser device, a thin wand is passed to heat the undersurface of the axillary skin where the sweat glands are. A bandage is applied and the patient goes home. Recovery is minimal with a return to work and play within 24 hours. A permanent reduction in sweating is achieved immediately and the risks are minimal to none.

What are the non-invasive alternatives?

The only other options are topical agents and in more severe cases, pills, which can have side effects.

Finally, what's the cost and how can I find a qualified doctor?

The average cost is \$1,000 per session. In very severe hyperhidrosis cases, insurance sometimes covers this. Most board certified dermatologists are qualified to perform this procedure.