

Iontophoresis treatment

Dermatology Department Patient Information Leaflet

Introduction

This leaflet is for people who are considering having iontophoresis to treat hyperhidrosis. It has information on what the treatment involves and its benefits and side effects.

What is hyperhidrosis?

Hyperhidrosis is a common condition and it means that a person sweats excessively.

The sweating may affect the whole of your body or just particular areas. The areas most commonly affected are:

- palms of your hands
- soles of your feet
- armpits
- face and chest
- groin

Usually both sides of the body are affected – for example, both feet or both hands.

Although the sweating is not dangerous to your health, it can be very embarrassing which can have a negative impact on your quality of life.

What is iontophoresis?

Iontophoresis involves treating hands and/or feet with a weak electric current passed through water. It is thought that this helps to temporarily 'jam' the electrical signals sent by the nervous system to the sweat glands.

It is not a permanent solution to the problem. If hospital treatment is successful, you will need to carry out maintenance therapy at home. This is because the sweating returns relatively quickly when the treatment is discontinued.

You can buy a machine yourself to carry out this maintenance therapy at home. Please ask a member of staff about how to buy a machine for home use.

Please note that you will not be able to have treatment if you:

- have a cardiac pacemaker or cardiac defibrillator
- have any metal orthopaedic implants, for example, metal hip replacements
- have a uterine implant (an IUD/IUS – a contraceptive 'coil')
- if you are or may be pregnant
- have a tumour
- suffer from polyneuropathy which is damage or disease affecting peripheral nerves
- are currently suffering from any type of thrombosis (blood clots)
- are under five years of age

What are the benefits?

Iontophoresis is a safe and effective method of reducing excessive sweating of the hands and/or feet.

What are the risks?

The treatment is not painful but the electric current can cause minor skin irritation around the area treated. We can put yellow, soft paraffin on the area to prevent this.

What are the alternatives?

You may have tried other treatments first such as avoiding foods or drinks that cause you to sweat more, avoiding clothes made of man-made fibres or taking a medicine prescribed by your GP. Iontophoresis will have been suggested as a possibility if these treatments did not work.

Other possible treatments include surgery or botulinum toxin injections – please note that these injections are not available on the NHS.

Your consultant can discuss these alternatives with you in more detail.

What happens before the treatment?

Please ensure you have plenty to drink. It is a good idea to avoid caffeine-based foods and drinks, and citrus juices, as these have been shown to make sweating worse in some people.

Before your treatment begins, we will ask you to remove any jewellery, including jewellery from any body piercings that you may have. Jewellery **should** really be removed as there is a chance of small burns in the area if it is not removed.

Please inform the nurse if you are unable to remove the jewellery. It may be possible to fully cover the area with soft paraffin to prevent burns. The jewellery needs to be fully covered to become insulated.

If you are wearing a bra with an exposed underwire or any other metal fastenings, you will need to take it off.

If you have any broken or cracked skin, we will cover this with a layer of yellow soft paraffin.

What happens when I have the treatment?

You will need to put your hands and/or feet in trays of shallow warm water for 15 minutes during each treatment cycle. These trays are attached to the iontophoresis machine by electrical leads.

Once sitting comfortably, we will ask you to put your hands/feet into the water. The nurse will adjust the power level until you start to feel a sensation like pins and needles. The feeling should not be so strong that you want to quickly remove your hands or feet from the water. The nurse will adjust the setting to make sure this comfort level is achieved.

When this level is reached, the nurse will stabilise the current. You will need to leave your hands and/or feet in the trays for 15 minutes.

After 15 minutes, the power reduces and the treatment cycle is finished.

Once you have had one treatment session, the nurse will show you how to control the machine yourself, as you may feel happy to control the machine on your own at your next appointment.

Important points during treatment

- Once the machine begins and you have your hands and/or feet in the water, please **do not at any time remove either your hands and/or feet from the trays** unless you are told to. It will break the current which may cause you to receive a small electric shock.

Although this is harmless, it will be very unpleasant and you will need to start the session again.

- **Do not at any time touch the metal plates that lie in the baths.** To ensure this does not happen, do not press down on the plastic grids too hard.

We will discuss these points with you before your treatment begins.

Does it hurt?

This is not a painful treatment and should not even be uncomfortable.

When do I have the treatment?

You will need to have nine treatment sessions over a three week period. Usually the treatment sessions are held on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Can I find out more?

You can find out more from the following web link:

NHS Choices

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Hyperhidrosis/Pages/Treatment.aspx>

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

Dermatology Department on 01384 244799 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dudleygroup.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/dermatology/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email patient.information@dgh.nhs.uk

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

للحصول على هذه النشرة بحجم أكبر، وعلى شكل إصدار صوتي و بلغات أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال بالرقم 08000730510.

此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

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Aceasta broșura poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru vă rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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