

# The York University Staff Association Health & Wellness News & Views

You're trucking along on a treadmill and as you reach for your towel to wipe off the perspiration on your forehead, you can't help but notice the person to the left who's sweating so much, it looks like he just came out of a dunk tank. Why is it that some people sweat like crazy while some are barely glistening? Well others sweat from their very red faces and others mostly sweat from their hands? When is sweating considered excessive and why am I sweating anyway? Some of us just sweat more than others, and while it can be a source of much embarrassment and shame (trust me, I'm a very sweaty person) it helps to understand some of the reasons behind it.

Let's start with the basics. The primary purpose of sweating is to cool your body down. "Sweating is the body's natural, neurological response to cool the body by stimulation the sweat glands to produce moisture that cools the body by drawing heat from the body during evaporation". Because everyone's body is different, the response differs from one individual to another, producing varying levels of perspiration.

There are three types of sweat and it is important to note that all sweat is not created equal.

## The Happy Sweats



This type of sweat happens when you smile too much. Be careful not to smile or you will ruin all your good shirts.

## The First Date Sweats



Sure, lifting together outside is a romantic idea for a first date, but be prepared to sweat.

## The Meat Sweats



Ahh.. The Meat Sweats :)

In all seriousness... Everyone sweats differently. Some people may have problems with all three types of perspiration well others ever only really experience only one or two. First, there's the body sweat - the odorless type that pours off you during a workout or when you stand out in the heat. This type of sweat exists to cool the skin and keep the body's internal temperature as close to 98.6 degrees as possible. Then, there's the dreaded sweaty palms and feet. Interestingly enough, this type of sweat helps increase adherence and grip. Evolutionally, it's the body's response to a perceived threat. That's why some of us notice it when feeling nervous or anxious. Also known as emotional sweating. Finally there's the sweat that's emitted from the armpits. This type also not a favourite produces so-called body odour, thanks mostly to the bacteria living in that area. Experts aren't entirely sure what the function for armpit perspiration is, but some think there's a pheromone type of communication going on. For example, if an individual in a herd senses danger and starts to emit those strong smells, it could alert others around them.

Whether you sweat buckets or stay fresh as a daisy has a lot to do with genetics. So you can blame your parents... or at least your environment during the first few years of your life. Experts think that it is because of the following, everyone is born with virtually the same number of sweat glands, but sweat glands mature during the first two years of life. Not all sweat glands become able to produce perspiration. It depends on need during those few years. So individuals who grew up in warm climates tend to have more active sweat glands than those of us who grew up in climate controlled environments or in cold climates.

But what if you sweat more than the average person? How much is too much? What causes your body to sweat in overdrive? As mentioned earlier, usually the reasons are pretty common, like heavy exertion or hot weather. And again, some people just sweat more than others. However excessive sweating can become hyperhidrosis - a condition formally recognized by physicians when a person begins to sweat profusely in normal, non stressful, not overly heated places or situations. Three percent of the population have hyperhidrosis. Although the cause of hyperhidrosis is not well understood physicians have developed several treatments to combat it. Sometimes excessive sweating can be caused by another condition in what is called secondary hyperhidrosis. Menopause, Thyroid problems, Diabetes, alcoholism, stroke and cancer can cause hyperhidrosis although several studies conclude that obesity is the leading cause of secondary hyperhidrosis.

But what if you've ruled out a medical condition and are still sweating up a storm? It may simply be a sign that you're in shape? According to recent studies the amount that you sweat does not necessarily indicate your level of fitness. In some cases where it appears that less fit individuals sweat more while exercising, it is likely that those individuals are less able to cope with the demands of increased heat during activity and, thus, may sweat more. Whereas fit people tend to sweat more efficiently by sweating early in the workout when their body temperature is lower so that their bodies don't store extra heat.

Something's are in your control when it comes to sweating. If you're a coffee drinker, caffeine can increase perspiration, so if you're concerned try cutting out a cup of joe. Drinking alcohol can have the **same** effect, so control the cocktails. Smokers may also sweat more since nicotine affect hormones, skin and brain. Wearing synthetic fabrics that trap heat in will make you feel warmer, and more sweaty, so opt for the more breathable fabrics. My Moto...

It is important to note that whatever level of sweating you experience? If it bothers you and prevents you from enjoying life to the fullest it deserves a consultation with a physician. Otherwise, grab your water bottle and get outside. Embrace your sweaty self, and try to be thankful your body is doing its job.

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I don't  
Sweat  
I  
Sparkle