

# Tips From The International Hyperhidrosis Society For Sweat-Free Job Interviewing And Career Management

As the new year begins, many resolutions will be made and many will be broken. Fortunately, for all those people who have resolved to find a new and better job, or to land a dreamed- about promotion, the International Hyperhidrosis Society (IHHS) has tips to make the process sweat-free and, therefore, more successful.

We all know that jobs and careers can cause **stress** and **anxiety** that leads to increased perspiration. In fact, according to a survey recently conducted by IHHS and Harris Interactive(R) nearly two-thirds of respondents said that job-related issues make them sweat more than anything else(1).

Whether one is interviewing for a new job, winning-and-dining clients, or attempting to give a compelling presentation to colleagues, it's mandatory to exude confidence and give off a positive first impression -- there is no room in these important workplace situations for excessive sweating! For instance, according to the above-mentioned the Harris poll, two-thirds of adults perceive someone who is sweating to be "nervous" and four out of ten adults who sweat on the job say that their sweating makes them feel very upset. And, in a separate study, results showed that 42% of those with **hyperhidrosis** (a medical condition characterized by near-constant excessive sweating) actually changed career paths because of their sweating problems.(2) In a similar poll conducted by the IHHS, 86% of responding hyperhidrosis patients said that they have experienced negative comments about their sweating, compounding the emotional impact that excessive sweating has on its sufferers(3).

As the second in a series of Tip Sheets offered from the leader in helping people eliminate and cope with excessive sweat, the IHHS is offering suggestions for minimizing and dealing with anxiety-induced sweating throughout one's career (for the first Tip Sheet visit <http://www.SweatHelp.org>). For all those people who have resolved to make positive changes in their careers in 2007, here are some great ways to get off on the right -- and dry -- foot!

-- Do your homework on a potential employer; visit the organization's Web site and review its background, products and offerings so that you are informed, can minimize surprises and stay cool

-- Visit online job search engines that offer tips on what to expect during interviews so you are prepared, practiced and ready to make the best first impression

-- Prior to an interview, write down key points and characteristics about yourself and examples of how you've succeeded; highlighting your successes will make you more confident which can lead to less sweating

-- Apply antiperspirant to your underarms once in the morning and again prior to bedtime; application twice daily -- and especially before bedtime -- has been shown to be more effective at keeping you dry. Antiperspirants may be used on hands and feet as well as on underarms; gently massaging them into the skin may be useful

-- Steer clear of sweat-inducing spicy foods, caffeinated beverages and alcohol in the days leading up to an interview or client presentation so you are clear-headed, aroma-free and sweat is minimized; it is probably a good idea to forgo the coffee offered by the interviewer too (choose a cool glass of water instead)

- Be sure to shower and wash with antibacterial soap, such as Safeguard(R), at least once a day; when perspiration and bacteria mix, **body odor** results
- Dress for success - wear polished and professional outfits made of natural materials (e.g., cotton) rather than synthetic materials (e.g., nylon). At the very least, ensure that your under layers are made of natural fabrics that offer more air circulation around the body and wick away moisture; avoid wearing suit jackets except during professional meetings and interviews
- "Dress shields," small pads that go in your armpits to absorb sweat, may be an option for you; you may also want to keep an extra shirt with you for emergencies
- Black or white solid colors or patterned fabrics with a black and white background will best camouflage underarm sweat marks
- Keep a handkerchief in your pocket to absorb extra sweat on your palm prior to shaking hands with a colleague or interviewer; or swipe your hand on your pants leg as you raise it to meet the offering hand (clothing made from absorbent materials like cotton or wool or in a darker shade are less likely to show sweat marks)
- Keep a travel-sized extra antiperspirant at your desk or in your car or purse for quick application prior to interviews, presentations and meetings
- Schedule client appointments and interviews earlier in the day -- you will be fresher physically and mentally and your commute is likely to be cooler in the mornings
- Participate in regular stress-relieving activities, such as meditation, yoga or other exercises; for immediate anxiety (and sweat) reduction, a breathing exercise will help. Note: A great practice right before "show time" is to breathe slowly through the nose for five seconds and blow out through your mouth for another five seconds; repeat for five minutes or as necessary
- Consider using a stronger over-the-counter soft solid antiperspirant. You can also apply an absorbent powder to body areas that you know will perspire in stressful situations (be sure to wipe excess powder off your clothing)
- And to really eliminate any chance of excessive sweat, talk to your dermatologist about longer-lasting sweat reducers, like prescription antiperspirants, Botox(R) injections or iontophoresis. For more info on these treatments and to find a physician familiar with hyperhidrosis, use the Physician Finder on the IHHS Web site at <http://www.SweatHelp.org>.

## **Human Resources Q&A**

Over the years, human resources managers have contacted the IHHS in search of ways to help company employees with their excessive sweating. We commend these personnel representatives for taking an active role in helping their employees. One example is below:

### **Question:**

"I have an employee who has indicated that he has hyperhidrosis (excessive sweating) leading to excessive body odor. Can you provide any suggestions on how to accommodate this? Even though it may or may not be defined as a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act, we obviously would like to assist the employee."

**Answer:**

Excessive body odor is typically not a characteristic of hyperhidrosis since the glands (there are two types of sweat glands) that are affected by hyperhidrosis produce large volumes of watery, odorless sweat which usually wash away excess bacteria, the main culprit in generating body odor. Still, if sweat is allowed to dry on the skin and mix with bacteria anywhere on the body, unappealing odor may result. The first step in minimizing odor is to keep sweaty body parts dry through the use of antiperspirants, powders, and frequent clothing changes. Next, regular washing with antibacterial soap will ensure that bacteria do not proliferate on the body. An antiperspirant, like Secret Platinum(R) soft solid should also be used consistently and a deodorant may be helpful. Sometimes changes in diet can also help, like avoiding caffeine and alcohol (which can stimulate sweating) and foods with pungent aromas that may permeate through the skin. The employee should also speak with a dermatologist who can prescribe stronger sweat minimizers, such as prescription antiperspirants or periodic Botox(R) injections. Since not all health plans may cover existing treatments, employees should speak with their benefits managers about which insurance plans cover recommended treatments and prescriptions. A wealth of information (from understanding the basics of sweat to insurance tools, including an overview of hyperhidrosis treatment coverage for many health plans) can be found on [SweatHelp.org](http://SweatHelp.org).

**About Hyperhidrosis**

While on the job stress can cause most people to sweat more than usual, more than eight million Americans sweat excessively all the time-despite the weather or the situation. Hyperhidrosis, defined as excessive sweating, is a chronic and debilitating condition estimated to affect at least three percent of the world's population. Those battling hyperhidrosis suffer loss of friendships and distancing from colleagues due to the embarrassment of profuse sweating. Additionally, they often withdraw socially because of the reactions of others.

Fortunately, symptoms are frequently treatable by a qualified dermatologist. Existing therapies include strong over-the-counter antiperspirants like Secret Platinum(R) soft solid, prescription antiperspirants, iontophoresis (a water bath conducting a mild electric current through the skin's surface), and longer-lasting physician-administered sweat reducers like Botox(R) injections. Surgery may be an option if other therapies are not effective, but should only be considered after speaking with a dermatologist as there is a high risk of serious and permanent side effects.

The International Hyperhidrosis Society Web site, [SweatHelp.org](http://SweatHelp.org), includes a Physician Finder to help anyone with excessive sweating to find medical help, information on additional treatment options and a comprehensive collection of insurance and reimbursement tools, including downloadable forms, which can help sufferers work with their physician, health insurance plan and employer to get the correct coverage for necessary treatments. There are practical tips to make the

most out of appointments with physicians and information on clinical trials and a free newsletter that will keep everyone current on hyperhidrosis news and medical breakthroughs. A self assessment tool is also available to help people determine how much sweat is too much. And because hyperhidrosis usually starts in the teenage years, the IHHS has created an online teen forum to help teenagers learn how to cope with the condition and find effective solutions.

The International Hyperhidrosis Society is a non-profit organization that strives to improve the quality of life for those affected by excessive sweating. The Society promotes research and conducts education on the physiological effects of hyperhidrosis, raises awareness about its emotional and economic impact and advocates for patient access to effective treatments. The International Hyperhidrosis Society is composed of members from all over the world, making it a true international network for people who treat or suffer from hyperhidrosis. Look for more Sweat Tips at <http://www.SweatHelp.org>.

(1) Results from a 2005 Harris Interactive Study are available upon request from the International Hyperhidrosis Society

(2) H Hamm, MK Naumann, JW Kowalski, S Kutt, C Kozma, C Teale. Primary Focal Hyperhidrosis: Disease Characteristics and Functional Impairment. *Dermatology* 2006; 212: 343, 353

(3) Results from a 2005 International Hyperhidrosis Society Online Survey are available upon request from the International Hyperhidrosis Society

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