

Patient information factsheet

Tap water iontophoresis treatment at home

We have given you this factsheet because your dermatology (skin) doctor has recommended that you start tap water iontophoresis at home for the treatment of hyperhidrosis. It explains what hyperhidrosis is, what tap water iontophoresis is, how the treatment works and what the risks and benefits are. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

This factsheet should be read alongside the manufacturer's leaflet included with your iontophoresis machine.

What is hyperhidrosis?

Hyperhidrosis is a condition in which a person sweats excessively (more than normal). It is a lifelong condition that is linked to family history. It can either affect the whole body (generalised) or certain areas of the body (localised). The most common areas affected are the hands, feet and armpits.

The condition normally begins in childhood or adolescence. Sometimes it gets better with age but there are things you can do and treatments that can help.

What is tap water iontophoresis?

Tap water iontophoresis is a widely used treatment for hyperhidrosis.

It is usually recommended to treat areas on the hands, feet or armpits. On rare occasions, it can also be used to treat areas on the face, genitals or groin.

The treatment involves using a machine to pass a weak electrical current through the affected areas of skin. To treat areas on the hands or feet, this is done by placing the affected areas in trays filled with tap water. To treat areas under the armpit or in the groin, this is done by placing tap water-soaked sponges or pads onto the affected areas of skin. A weak electrical current is then passed through the water to the skin for a short period of time (usually 20 to 30 minutes). This temporarily stops the release of sweat. Exactly how it works is unknown. Approximately 70% of people find tap water iontophoresis effective, when following a treatment plan.

Please note that for this treatment, you will need to buy your own iontophoresis machine (see information below for more details).

Where can I buy an iontophoresis machine?

You can find various iontophoresis machine suppliers online. Machine prices vary depending on the make and model of the machine, but typically cost around £400 to £600. For up-to-date prices, please contact suppliers directly.

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Where hyperhidrosis is classed as a chronic illness, you will be able to get VAT deduction when you buy an iontophoresis machine.

We have included details for a recommended UK-based supplier below:

Iontocentre

Telephone: **0800 612 4812**

Website: www.iontocentre.com

Iontocentre have a wide range of machines that come with:

- a two to five-year warranty
- instruction leaflets and videos
- free support for the lifetime of the machine
- a ten-week money back guarantee
- a variety of payment options (such as rental or monthly instalment plans)

Please note that the information above may be subject to change. Always read Iontocentre's terms and conditions before purchasing a machine.

Iontophoresis is not painful or uncomfortable. However, some people (for example, children) may prefer to use a pulsed current machine rather than a direct current machine. You can discuss which type of machine is most suitable for you with the iontophoresis machine supplier.

How often will I need to have this treatment?

Iontophoresis is a lifelong management treatment. You will need to follow your individual machine's recommended treatment plan. Treatment normally involves an initial loading dose (given on days 1, 2, 4, 7, 10, 15 and 22), then top-up treatments as and when your skin starts to get clammy again.

Please note that you will not experience immediate results after your first treatment.

Is this treatment suitable for everyone?

As a general rule, you should not have iontophoresis treatment if you:

- are pregnant (but it is safe to breastfeed while having this treatment)
- have metal implants or joint replacements in the treatment area that will be affected by the flow of the current (if the metal implant is not in the path of the current or in the immediate treatment area, then it is safe for you to have iontophoresis treatment)
- have a metal contraceptive coil (this applies to foot iontophoresis)
- have a cardiac pacemaker or implanted cardio-defibrillator
- have epilepsy (a common condition that affects the brain and causes frequent seizures)
- have thrombosis (a blood clot in a blood vessel)
- have polyneuropathy (a condition where the peripheral nerves are damaged) in the area needing treatment
- have large skin wounds in the area needing treatment which cannot be sufficiently protected with petroleum jelly

This treatment isn't suitable for children, especially those under five years of age. If your child is under 12 years of age, contact the iontophoresis machine supplier or us for advice.

Please read the specific instructions included with your machine before using it. If you are unsure whether it is safe for you to have iontophoresis treatment, please contact us for advice.

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Are there any side effects?

Side effects of iontophoresis are usually **temporary and affect the treatment area(s) only**.

Side effects may include:

- a rash that is itchy, red, bumpy or dry (this can be treated with emollients - moisturising treatments applied directly to the skin to soothe and hydrate it)
- small blisters or bruises
- pain (this may be a slight tingling, pricking, stinging or burning sensation) that is usually worse during the first few treatments
- thickening of the skin
- a small, harmless electric shock (if not using the machine correctly)

Please read the full list of potential side effects included with your machine as this information may vary slightly.

Are there any alternatives?

Your doctor has recommended this treatment for you. However, there may be other treatments available. Ask your doctor if you are uncertain.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

Southampton dermatology centre
Level E, Fanshawe Wing
Royal South Hants Hospital
Southampton
SO14 0YG

Telephone: **023 8120 2871** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm)

Email: **dermppc@uhs.nhs.uk**

Useful links

www.bad.org.uk/pils/iontophoresis-for-hyperhidrosis

www.skinhealthinfo.org.uk/condition/hyperhidrosis

www.dermnetnz.org/procedures/iontophoresis.html

www.patient.info/health/excessive-sweating-hyperhidrosis

www.hyperhidrosisuk.org

www.pcids.org.uk/clinical-guidance/hyperhidrosis

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