

**National Institutes of Health / U.S. National Library of Medicine**



## COVID-19 is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation.



Get the latest public health information from CDC:

<https://www.coronavirus.gov>

Get the latest research information from NIH: <https://covid19.nih.gov>

Learn more about COVID-19 and you from HHS: <https://combatcovid.hhs.gov>

[Home](#) → [Medical Encyclopedia](#) → Iontophoresis

URL of this page: [//medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007293.htm](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007293.htm)

# Iontophoresis

Iontophoresis is the process of passing a weak electrical current through the skin. Iontophoresis has a variety of uses in medicine. This article discusses the use of iontophoresis to decrease sweating by blocking sweat glands.

## Description

The area to be treated is placed into water. A gentle current of electricity passes through the water. A technician carefully and gradually increases the electrical current until you feel a light tingling sensation.

The therapy lasts about 30 minutes and requires several sessions each week.

How iontophoresis works is not exactly known. It is thought that the process somehow plugs the sweat glands and temporarily prevents you from sweating.

Iontophoresis units are also available for home use. If you use a unit at home, be sure to follow the instructions that come with the machine.

## Why the Procedure is Performed

Iontophoresis may be used to treat excessive sweating (hyperhidrosis) of the hands, underarms, and feet.

## Risks

Side effects are rare, but may include skin irritation, dryness, and blistering. Tingling may continue even after the treatment has ended.

## Alternative Names

Hyperhidrosis – iontophoresis; Excessive sweating – iontophoresis

## References

Langtry JAA. Hyperhidrosis. In: Lebwohl MG, Heymann WR, Berth-Jones J, Coulson IH, eds. *Treatment of Skin Disease: Comprehensive Therapeutic Strategies*. 5th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2018:chap 109.

Pollack SV. Electrosurgery. In: Bologna JL, Schaffer JV, Cerroni L, eds. *Dermatology*. 4th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2018:chap 140.

## Review Date 4/16/2019

Updated by: Michael Lehrer, MD, Clinical Associate Professor, Department of Dermatology, University of Pennsylvania Medical Center, Philadelphia, PA. Review provided by VeriMed Healthcare Network. Also reviewed by David Zieve, MD, MHA, Medical Director, Brenda Conaway, Editorial Director, and the A.D.A.M. Editorial team.



A.D.A.M., Inc. is accredited by URAC, for Health Content Provider ([www.urac.org](http://www.urac.org)). URAC's [accreditation program](#) is an independent audit to verify that A.D.A.M. follows rigorous standards of quality and accountability. A.D.A.M. is among the first to achieve this important distinction for online health information and services. Learn more about A.D.A.M.'s [editorial policy](#) [editorial process](#) and [privacy policy](#). A.D.A.M. is also a founding member of Hi-Ethics. This site complies with the HONcode standard for trustworthy health information: [verify here](#).

The information provided herein should not be used during any medical emergency or for the diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. A licensed physician should be consulted for diagnosis and treatment of any and all medical conditions. Call 911 for all medical emergencies. Links to other sites are provided for information only -- they do not constitute endorsements of those other sites. Copyright 1997–2021, A.D.A.M., Inc. Duplication for commercial use must be authorized in writing by ADAM Health Solutions.



---

U.S. National Library of Medicine 8600 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20894  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Institutes of Health  
Page last updated: 05 January 2021