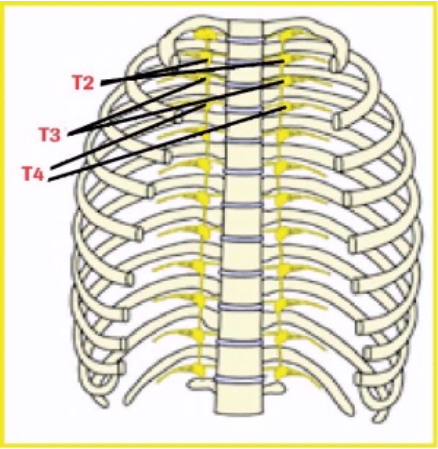
ENDOSCOPIC THORACIC SYMPATHECTOMY

Unique Procedure To Eliminate Excessive Sweating



The right and left sympathetic nerve chains are yellow. T2, T3 and T4 indicate thoracic vertabrae.

Eisenhower Medical Center Cardiothoracic Surgeons Surindra Mitruka, MD and Joseph Wilson, MD are now performing endoscopic thoracic sympathectomy, or ETS, a surgery that helps patients suffering from severe sweating, also known as hyperhidrosis. ETS is most often indicated for individuals suffering from excessive sweating of the face, hands, and underarms.

The minimally-invasive, same-day procedure offers immediate results for those suffering from this problem who have not responded to other methods of treatment. “The procedure essentially interrupts the messages from the sympathetic nerve between the second and third rib and can control the excessive sweating and or redness that patients often find very embarrassing,” says Mitruka. “Typically, the procedure takes only 45 minutes, and at most, may require an overnight hospital stay.”

The ETS procedure uses only two small incisions in the armpit area while the patient is under general anesthesia. A tiny telescope attached to a magnifying camera and a dissecting instrument is inserted to access the sympathetic nerve. Post-operative discomfort is minimal and recovery is quick.

In her early 40s, when she was working full time as a financial professional, Dorothy Raff began having what she thought were excessive hot flashes. “I could be doing anything and it would happen. I would literally drip,” shares Raff.

“THIS IS A MIRACLE!”
—Dorothy Raff

“I turned extremely red—perspiration would drip down my neck and down the back of my blouse. It was so severe, I had people ask me if I was having a heart attack.”

“I wore my hair very short because the back of my hair was soaked all the time,” explains Raff. “Also, I remember sleeping wrapped in a towel just to avoid sweating all over my pillowcase.”

Still, when Dorothy sought help, her requests were met with skepticism. “They thought I was exaggerating,” says Raff. “Nobody considered it to be anything but menopause. I was going through a divorce and had lost my father, and everyone said I just had too much on my plate.”

Years passed. After Dorothy experienced menopause, she thought the flushing and sweating would stop, but it did not. “I stopped going to public events. Dating was out of the question,” shares Raff. “It was extremely isolating.”

Finally, while researching her condition on the Internet, Dorothy found that her condition had a name— hyperhidrosis. She printed out an article and took it to Eisenhower Medical Center Cardiothoracic Surgeon Surindra Mitruka, MD. “I would have never thought a cardiothoracic surgeon could help me with this, but the minute I walked in the office, they knew what I had,” exclaims Raff. “Even the girl at the front desk understood. I handed Dr. Mitruka the article. He knew what it was and that it wasn’t funny. I was finally being taken seriously.”

Dorothy had the endoscopic thoracic sympathectomy procedure in November 2008. Now at 67, Raff is experiencing life free of excessive sweating for the first time in 25 years. “Everyone was wonderful. They told me I could have compensatory sweating…but I didn’t. My hair is longer now, and my pillowcases don’t have to be changed. This is a miracle! I still cannot believe it.”

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