No sweat: Could it be anhidrosis? [1]

Dear Alice,

I have a wonderful daughter who is very active and loves to play soccer. The problem for her is that she never seems to sweat and her face turns bright red, which concerns us greatly. She loves to have her face cooled with a cold towel when she comes to the sideline. None of her other teammates seem to have this problem, however, and she seems to be normally hydrated before her games and practices. I've heard of the condition anhidrosis (lack of sweat), but can't seem to find much on this. Can you help?

Thank you.

Answer

Dear Reader,

Here’s some info to quench your thirst for knowledge: anhidrosis (which is sometimes referred to as hypohidrosis) refers to a medical condition for a significantly decreased amount of, or lack of, sweating. Perspiration is the body’s way of regulating temperature and preventing an individual from overheating. So when a person doesn't sweat, it could be an indicator of a serious condition. A person who doesn't sweat (or doesn't sweat enough) can easily become overheated, experience heat cramps and exhaustion, and even have a heat stroke — which can be life threatening. Children are particularly vulnerable to the complications of anhidrosis because their body temperatures rise more quickly and get rid of heat less efficiently than adults. If you’re concerned that your daughter may have anhidrosis, it’s a good idea to talk with a health care provider about how to treat any underlying concerns that could be causing this condition. In the meantime, you can read on for some strategies to keep her cool in the face of heat.

There are a range of health conditions that can lead to anhidrosis, including:

- Dehydration
- Skin diseases or conditions that can block or clog sweat ducts
- Injury to the skin and sweat glands, including burns
- Use of certain medications
- Inherited conditions that affect the metabolic system or that impact the development of
sweat glands

- Conditions associated with nerve damage, such as diabetes, alcoholism, or Guillain-Barre syndrome

The prognosis for anhidrosis can vary based on the cause, which is why a medical provider may be able to provide some insight to determine the root cause of your daughter's lack of sweating. They can do some investigating into your daughter's condition, health history, and recommend appropriate next steps.

It sounds like you've already discovered a cold towel as a way to help your daughter stay cool. Other strategies that may help mitigate some of the heat-related symptoms that you've described include encouraging your daughter to take frequent breaks during a soccer match or while engaging in other physical activities. She can also make sure to drink plenty of cool water, fruit juice, or sports drinks with electrolytes to stay cool and well hydrated when playing. If your daughter experiences any heat-related complications that don't improve with these methods, it may be necessary to seek out immediate medical attention.

Hope this helps you and your daughter beat the heat!

Alice!

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General Health [2]
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Related questions

- Is drinking cold water harmful? [4]
- Coach limits water during practice — Help! [5]
- What to do about salty sweat stains? [6]

Resources

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