

8 Easy Ways to Deal with Hot Flashes

Hot flashes can range from a mild annoyance to a knock-you-down disruption. While hormonal treatment may be an option for some women, there are many other, simple ways to manage your hot flashes, so they don't get too much in the way of you living your life.

What is a Hot Flash?

Approximately 85 percent of women experience hot flashes during menopause. For roughly 15 percent of these women, the hot flashes are severe. Hot flashes are the result of your body's decreasing levels of estrogen as you near and go through menopause, which can mess with your body's heating/cooling system and cause the release of heat in your body when you don't need it. What you feel is mild to severe heat in your upper body, a fast heartbeat, flushing, sweating and then chills. This can wreak havoc on your ability to work and your quality of life.

Turn Down the Heat

You never really know when a hot flash might strike. They're also hard to prevent. There are some things you can do though to stop yourself from suffering needlessly.

Dress in Layers

The better you can keep yourself from getting warm, the better you can potentially avoid a hot flash. One way to do this is to wear layers. Remove layers as needed as you start to feel warm. Should you experience a hot flash, you'll like having the ability to shed layers when hot and having layers to put back on if feeling chilled after. If possible, keep a fan in your workspace to keep your personal area cool.

Reduce Your Stress

Stress doesn't lead to hot flashes, but it can make them worse. Good ways to lower stress include exercising and doing relaxing activities like meditation and yoga. Avoid bursts of anger.

Pace Your Breathing

Do the following as a routine activity or at the first hint of a hot flash:

- Sit in a comfortable position.
- Breathe in slowly for five seconds, pushing your stomach muscles out.
- Then breathe out slowly for five seconds, pulling your stomach muscles in and up.
- Repeat for 15 minutes. If you're short on time, even 1-2 minutes can do you good.

Avoid Certain Foods

All the following are linked to increased hot flashes, so consider avoiding them:

- Hot and spicy foods.
- Caffeine.
- Alcohol.

Don't Smoke

You've heard how bad smoking is for your health, but did you know it's linked to increased hot flashes?

Ask Your Doctor about Hormone Replacement Therapy

Estrogen therapy is the most effective treatment for hot flashes, but it's not for everyone. Hormone treatment with testosterone may provide symptom relief as well as increase sexual desire and enjoyment in some women. Ask your doctor if you are a candidate for hormone replacement therapy.

Dab on Some Mint

Some women say a few drops of essence of peppermint oil on the inside of the wrists provides a cooling effect.

Consider Dietary Supplements

While studies show black cohosh and vitamin E are no more effective than placebos, some women report a lessening of symptoms after taking these supplements. Soy and plant estrogens can have similar effects. It is important to talk to your doctor before taking any dietary supplements as some people experience negative side effects or interactions with medications.