

Hot Flashes

DEFINITION

Hot flashes can happen at any time, leaving you sweaty and red-faced. Although other hormonal conditions can cause them, hot flashes are frequently due to menopause. Hot flashes are quite common. As many as 3 out of 4 women experience hot flashes as they go through menopause.

Treatment for hot flashes isn't necessary if you're tolerating them well. If your hot flashes become particularly bothersome, treatment options are available. Finding the best way to control hot flashes can take time. Start by asking yourself how hot flashes are disrupting your daily life. Then, with your doctor's help, consider the benefits and drawbacks of lifestyle changes, prescription medications and other common remedies.

SYMPTOMS

When you're having a hot flash, you may experience:

- A feeling of pressure in your head as the hot flash begins
- A feeling of mild warmth to intense heat spreading through your upper body and face
- A flushed appearance with red, blotchy skin on your face, neck and upper chest
- Rapid heartbeat
- Perspiration, mostly on your upper body
- A chilled feeling as the hot flash subsides

Less common symptoms associated with hot flashes include:

- Weakness
- Fatigue
- Faintness
- Dizziness

- Hot flashes vary in frequency — you may have several in one day or just a few each week. You could experience persistent sweating throughout the day and night, or you may just occasionally feel warmer than you used to. Hot flashes can last as long as 30 minutes, but most subside within a couple of minutes. Nighttime hot flashes (night sweats) can wake you from a sound sleep.

WHEN TO SEE A DOCTOR

If hot flashes become particularly bothersome and disrupt your daily routines, consider making an appointment with your doctor to discuss treatment options.

CAUSES

The exact cause of hot flashes isn't known, but the signs and symptoms point to factors affecting the function of your body's thermostat — the hypothalamus. This area at the base of your brain regulates body temperature and other basic processes. The estrogen reduction you experience during menopause may disrupt hypothalamic function, leading to hot flashes.

Low estrogen alone doesn't often seem to induce hot flashes, as children and women with low levels of estrogen due to medical conditions usually don't experience hot flashes. Instead, the withdrawal of estrogen, as happens during menopause, appears to be the trigger.

RISK FACTORS

Not all women who go through menopause experience hot flashes. Although it's not clear why some women get hot flashes and others don't, the following factors increase your risk of hot flashes:

- **Smoking.** Women who smoke are more likely to get hot flashes.
- **Obesity.** A high body mass index (BMI) is associated with a higher frequency of hot flashes.
- **Physical inactivity.** If you don't exercise, you're more likely to have hot flashes during menopause.
- **Ethnicity.** More African-American women report menopausal hot flashes than do women of European descent. Hot flashes are less common in women of Japanese and Chinese descent than in white European women.

COMPLICATIONS

Sleep problems are often a complication of hot flashes. Nighttime hot flashes (night sweats) can wake you from sleep and, over time, may cause chronic insomnia. These sleep disturbances can, in turn, eventually lead to memory problems, anxiety and depression in some women.

PREPARING FOR YOUR APPOINTMENT

Because appointments can be brief, and because there's often a lot of ground to cover, it's a good idea to be well prepared for your appointment with your doctor.

- **Write down the symptoms you're experiencing**, including any that may seem unrelated to the reason for which you scheduled the appointment.
- **Write down key personal information**, including when you had your last period and any medical concerns you've had related to your reproductive health or to menopause.
- **Make a list of all medications**, as well as any vitamins or supplements that you're taking.
- **Take a family member or friend along**, if possible. Sometimes it can be difficult to soak up all the information provided to you during an appointment. Someone who accompanies you may remember something that you missed or forgot.
- **Write down questions to ask your doctor.**

TESTS AND DIAGNOSIS

Your doctor can diagnose hot flashes based on a description of the symptoms you're experiencing. To confirm the cause of your hot flashes, your doctor may also ask questions about your medical history and reproductive health, including the date of your last period.

Source: Mayoclinic.com

PARTICIPATE IN A CLINICAL RESEARCH STUDY FOR HOT FLASHES

If you are a post-menopausal woman age 18-70 who has moderate to severe Hot Flashes, and you are interested in finding out more about study participation, please [click here](#) to complete an on-line application or call:

602-931-4507, ext 225

Compensation may be available to qualified participants for travel;

Participation is voluntary.