

Hot Flashes Management

Hot flashes are feelings of intense warmth that come and go. While harmless, they still can make you feel very hot and uncomfortable. It is related to the decrease or lack of the female sex hormone (called estrogen) in women. In men, the male sex hormone (called testosterone) can be decreased, leading to hot flashes. Your brain senses the low hormones, and your internal temperature is read as too hot. The body then tries to cool off by releasing adrenalin and sweating. The hot flashes may occur anytime during the day, but are common at night. Hot flashes can interrupt sleep, which can make you feel tired, irritable, nervous or anxious.

Lifestyle Management:

- Dress in light sleeping clothes, and layers in daytime so you can remove clothing if you get too hot
- Stay away from triggers of hot flashes such as alcohol, caffeine (soda, coffee, chocolate), and hot or spicy foods
- Be aware that some allergy and cold medicines may make hot flashes worse. Consult with your doctor about changing or stopping these medications.
- Try to keep cool, and if it is hot where you spend your time, take a fan with you.
- Exercise may decrease the number and strength of hot flashes.
- Decrease stress by relaxing or listening to peaceful music or biofeedback because stress can make hot flashes come more often.

Over the counter medication management of hot flashes:

- There are a number of nonhormonal medications available for the treatment of hot flashes. Their goal is not to eliminate hot flashes altogether but to diminish their intensity and frequency. Vitamin E 800IU daily, Vitamin B6 200mg daily or Peridin-C 2 tablets 3 times a day, are over the counter agents that may be of help.
- The medical community is only beginning to study the properties of soy. It works in a variety of ways. In some organs it acts like an estrogen and in others it blocks estrogen. It also has many effects other than hormonal ones. Overall the data on soy are good, and it's probably safe for women with breast cancer, but the final answers aren't in yet. Moderation is the key. There is data to support the fact that less than 3 servings a day is safe but consult with your physician before using soy.

Prescription Medications:

- Antidepressants: some have been shown to decrease hot flashes by 50 to 60%. Includes Celexa, Prozac, Luvox, Paxil, Zoloft, and Effexor.
- Clonidine, Effexor: These high blood pressure medicines may lessen hot flashes in some people but can cause lightheadedness and/or low blood pressure.
- Megace: this medication can have the side effect of appetite stimulation.
- Bellergal: This may lessen hot flashes but can cause mouth dryness, sleepiness, blurred vision, and cannot be combined with alcohol.