



Women's Mid-Life Health Centre of Saskatchewan

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Frequently Asked Questions



Hot Flashes & Night Sweats (Vasomotor Symptoms) - Alternatives to Hormone Therapy (HT)

Question: I have mild hot flashes and night sweats. Hormone therapy isn't an option for me right now, but what can I do to relieve the hot flashes?

Hot flashes and night sweats affect 60%-80% of women during the years leading up to menopause. After menopause, about 60% of postmenopausal women will continue to experience hot flashes for up to 7 years and 15% report they have experienced hot flashes for 15 years or longer! Hot flashes are a chief menopausal complaint, causing women to look for anything that will help fix their discomfort!

Symptoms include: feeling hot in the upper body, face and head; sweating; heart palpitations (rapid heart beating); apprehension; anxiety. These symptoms all contribute to discomfort, inconvenience and stress, and can also cause sleep interruptions that disrupt the quality of life.

What may be helpful?

- Lifestyle changes:
 - Keep cool - use fans, control room temperature, wear cotton clothing in layers so you can adjust your body temperature by removing layers
 - Regular exercise
 - 30 minutes of brisk activity daily
 - Maintain a healthy weight
 - Quit smoking and avoid second hand smoke
 - Avoid triggers such as hot beverages, caffeine, alcohol, hot sauces/spices
 - Pace your breathing with relaxing techniques such as Tai Chi and yoga
- Over the counter products* (this is just a sample, with notes about effectiveness):
 - Soy - 20 to 50 grams of soy protein per day - mixed clinical reviews about soy's effectiveness, and its safety is not known for women with breast cancer. (Note that 240 ml [1 cup] soy contains 6-9 g soy protein)
 - Vitamin E - mixed clinical evidence about effectiveness
 - Black Cohosh - 40 mg daily - some evidence for helping mild hot flashes, short term use (6 months)
 - Dong Quai - no evidence for helping hot flashes
 - Chasteberry - not enough evidence about effectiveness
 - Wild yam - not effective, as it does not convert to progesterone in the body
- * Always check with your pharmacist before adding herbal products to your medication plan
- Acupuncture - mixed clinical reviews about effectiveness
- Prescription medications:
 - Hormone Therapy (HT) - estrogen, progesterone, used together or separately; taken by mouth (oral) or by skin patch (transdermal)
 - Antidepressants - Venlafaxine, Fluoxetine, Paroxetine
 - Anticonvulsant - Gabapentin - effective for hot flash treatment
 - Antihypertensive - Clonidine - effective for mild hot flashes

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