

# HOT FLASH

*or.....*





# POWER SURGE?

By Nedra Downing, DO

*A hot flash by any other name is still a hot flash – a sudden feeling of intense heat in the upper body and face. Hot flashes occur among women at midlife and are one of the most common and earliest signs that menopause is approaching. Some women experience very few hot flashes or none at all. Others have frequent hot flashes accompanied by intense sweating and itching. When they occur at night, they are called night sweats which usually interfere with sleep.*

## **WHAT CAUSES HOT FLASHES?**

The cause of hot flashes is not certain. Declining and fluctuating levels of estrogens may be the cause. There are estrogen receptors on heat regulating areas of the brain. Blood vessels dilate causing warmth and flushing in the skin.

## **TRIGGERS FOR HOT FLASHES**

If you are prone to hot flashes, avoid the following:

- Caffeine
- Refined sugar and white flour foods
- Alcohol
- Diet sodas and other soft drinks
- Food dyes and artificial sweeteners
- Fried foods and charred meats
- Partially hydrogenated oils and trans fats
- Chocolate, cocoa and tea for some women
- Spices

- Stress
- Heat and sun exposure
- Cigarette smoke, wood smoke and grill fumes
- Environmental toxins like formaldehyde
- Allergic foods
- Salty snack foods like chips and cheese curls
- Processed meats, cold cuts, ham, hot dogs

## **TREATMENTS**

Conventional medicine treats hot flashes with powerful prescription hormones that have been reported to have serious side effects. Other types of drugs including antidepressants, tranquilizers, blood pressure and anti-seizure medications are also used.

Many women seek natural choices and wish to be empowered to help themselves. Safe and effective options include: diet, nutrients, exercise, herbs, aromatherapy, homeopathic remedies,

hands-on treatments, activities to reduce stress, and natural hormones if needed.

## **BIO-IDENTICAL HORMONES**

Balancing hormones with Bio-Identical Hormones is safer and more natural than using strong, synthetic or horse-urine-derived hormones. The key word here is balancing. Having saliva hormones checked before starting them and after three to six months is a reasonable approach to achieving balance. Often only small amounts are needed to bring relief from hot flashes.

## **HERBS**

Herbs are some of the oldest hot flash remedies. They can be brewed as teas to be drunk hot or iced, or taken as tinctures which are dropped into cool water and then swallowed. Tablets and capsules are very popular made from single or blended herbs. Herbs are slow to act, so stay with your choices. Some of the best time-honored herbs for hot flashes are the following:

# COMMON TRIGGERS FOR HOT FLASHES

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- **Alcohol**
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- **Food dyes and artificial sweeteners**
- **Fried foods and charred meats**
- **Partially hydrogenated oils and trans fats**
- **Chocolate, cocoa and tea for some women**
- **Spices**
- **Stress**
- **Heat and sun exposure**
- **Cigarette smoke, wood smoke and grill fumes**
- **Environmental toxins like formaldehyde**
- **Allergic foods**
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- **Processed meats, cold cuts, ham, hot dogs**

- Black cohosh
- Vitex
- Evening primrose or black currant oil
- Ashwaganda
- Raspberry leaf, red clover, sweet briar, dandelion, fenugreek seed, hops, elder flower, sage and chamomile teas
- Motherwort
- Dong quai
- Witch hazel facial swabs
- Chamomile tub soaks

## NUTRIENTS

Vitamins, minerals and other nutrients are useful support at midlife. Most noteworthy is Vitamin E, which has often helped with hot flashes. Getting enough of other nutrients, such as Vitamins C, D2, B-Complex, minerals, essential fatty acids is important.

## FOODS TO HELP REDUCE HOT FLASHES

Dietary choices and cooking methods influence hot flashes. Eating smaller meals and more cold foods helps. Organic plant-based meals consisting of vegetables, roots, grains, legumes, fruits, nuts, seeds, quinoa, buckwheat and sea vegetables are the core of a good diet. Meat, poultry, fish or tofu may be included to add protein. Drinking vegetable juices including green, leafy vegetables; eating a fresh green salad daily and vegetable soup often is helpful.

Plant foods rich in phyosterols can help regulate hormones since they have similar ring structures. Among the best are: broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, bamboo shoots, artichokes, red cabbage, eggplant, okra, turnips, apricots, figs, cantaloupe, pomegranate, rye, barley, chickpeas, and pine nuts.

Soy foods help balance and support hormones. One study showed that 20 grams of soy protein per day reduced hot flashes. Two-thirds of women in North America suffer from hot flashes, while Asian women who eat more soy seldom have them.

Also, be sure to drink plenty of cool water, mineral water, or dilute organic green tea.

## EXERCISE DAILY

Walking, swimming, bicycling, dancing, house work, and gardening are all good exercises to keep blood flowing and lungs working.

## COOL TEMPERATURES

Use fans or air conditioning and stay out of the

sun. Wear clothing made from natural fibers such as cotton, hemp, or silk.

## MEDITATION, TAI CHI, YOGA

Quieting the mind and deepening relaxation through daily practice can help to reduce stress response and thus hot flashes. Slow, deep breathing as taught in yoga or Buddhist meditation is very helpful for staving off hot flashes. Susan Weed wrote a classic book on menopause which includes a Kundalini yoga meditation.

## PLEASURABLE ACTIVITIES

Such activities as reading, listening to music, or journal writing can help. Massage, Reiki, or Reflexology treatments are wonderful for helping women feel grounded, and for balancing chakras.

## HOMEOPATHIC REMEDIES

Homeopathic Remedies were the choices of our ancestors. These remarkable little remedies are very safe and effective.

- Lachesis
- Sepia
- Pulsatilla
- Belladonna Compositum
- Sulfur
- Nux vomica
- Rhus tox
- Cell salts

## BACH FLOWER REMEDIES

Aromatherapy is pleasant and easy. Oils may be diluted with organic carrier oils such as almond oil and massaged into the skin. A few drops may be added to warm water for a tub soak or bath. Oils may be absorbed into a cotton ball and placed near a pillow or on a desk. Rosewater facial spray or lavender hair oil can be used.

- Lavender
- Clary sage
- Geranium
- Bergamot
- Chamomile
- Frankincense
- Jasmine
- Rose
- Sandalwood
- Ylang ylang

No need to just suffer through hot flashes when so many wonderful remedies are available to ease the way. Choose those that appeal to you and give it a try!