

# HOT FLUSHES DURING MENOPAUSE:

## what they are and how to treat them

Hot flushes are a sudden feeling of heat and anxiety. They cause increased blood flow in the face, neck and chest resulting in sweating and redness.

### WHY DO HOT FLUSHES OCCUR?

When oestrogen levels drop, the hypothalamus (the body's thermostat) becomes more sensitive to small changes in body temperature. So, when the hypothalamus detects that the body is too hot, it produces **hot flushes** as a way of cooling the body down(3).

### WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF HOT FLUSHES?

The most common signs and symptoms, which can occur at any time of the day or night, include (3):

Sudden sensation of warmth that spreads across the chest, neck, and face.

Sweating, especially in the upper body.

Shivering sensation once the hot flush begins to subside.

Anxiety and fatigue.

### HOW ARE HOT FLUSHES TREATED?

One of the most effective treatments for managing menopausal symptoms such as **hot flushes** is hormone replacement therapy (HRT). This is a safe and effective treatment for most women going through the menopause.

HRT involves the use of oestrogen to replace low levels in the body.

There are other complementary and alternative treatments that include herbal remedies and bioidentical or "natural" compounded hormones. Please note that these are not recommended for **hot flushes** or other menopausal symptoms, as they have not been proven safe or effective.

The main recommendation before starting any treatment to manage your symptoms is to seek advice from your GP. He or she will be able to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of different treatments (5).

### OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SYMPTOM MANAGEMENT

It is important to bear in mind that if you are receiving treatment for menopausal symptoms, you should have follow-up appointments with your doctor to find out how it is working and if any adjustments need to be made (5).

Other recommendations for relief (3) are:

Keep rooms well ventilated.

Wear layers.

Avoid sudden changes in temperature.

Exercise daily.

Eat a Mediterranean diet.

Avoid alcohol, consume less caffeine, hot and spicy food, and stop smoking.

In addition, specialists suggest making these changes at least 3 months before starting any type of treatment (6).

For many women, practising breathing and relaxation techniques such as yoga can help alleviate their frequency and intensity (2).

### REFERENCES

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