

Hot flushes

Most women will experience hot flushes when going through the menopause.

They're often described as a sudden feeling of heat that seems to come from nowhere and spreads throughout the body.

You may also experience sweating, palpitations and flushing of the face.

Some women only have occasional hot flushes that do not really bother them. Others have some every day and find them uncomfortable, disruptive and embarrassing.

Hot flushes can start a few months or years before your [periods](#) stop. They usually continue for several years after your last period.

Causes of hot flushes

Hot flushes usually affect women who are approaching the menopause. The changes in your hormone levels affect your body's temperature and may cause hot flushes.

They can happen without warning throughout the day and night.

They can also be brought on by:

- eating spicy foods
- caffeine and alcohol
- smoking
- wearing thick clothing
- a high temperature
- feeling stressed or anxious
- treatment for certain types of cancer
- certain medicines
- some health conditions, such as an overactive thyroid, [diabetes](#) and tuberculosis

Symptoms of hot flushes

Women often describe a hot flush as a creeping feeling of intense warmth that spreads across your whole body and face.

It lasts for several minutes. Others say the warmth is like the sensation of being out in the hot sun, or feeling like a furnace.

Hot flushes are usually harmless.

Talk to your GP if you're having other symptoms as well, such as:

- feeling generally unwell
- fatigue
- weakness
- weight loss
- diarrhoea

Treatments for hot flushes

Many women learn to live with menopause-related hot flushes. If they're bothering you, talk to your GP about treatments that may help.

[Hormone replacement therapy \(HRT\)](#) is the most effective treatment for hot flushes. Your GP will talk to you about the benefits and risks of using HRT.

HRT is not recommended if you have had a type of cancer that's sensitive to hormones, such as breast cancer. Your GP will talk to you about alternatives.

Other medicines that can help include some [antidepressants](#) and a medicine called [clonidine](#).

[Find out more about treatment for hot flushes and other menopausal symptoms](#)

Tips for reducing hot flushes

You can try these tips to ease your symptoms:

- cut out or reduce coffee and tea
- stop smoking
- keep the room cool and use an electric or handheld fan if necessary
- if you feel a flush coming on, spray your face with cool water or use a cold gel pack
- wear loose layers of light cotton or silk clothes so you can easily take some clothes off if you overheat
- have layers of sheets on the bed, rather than a duvet, so you can remove them as you need to
- cut down on alcohol
- sip cold or iced drinks
- have a lukewarm shower or bath instead of a hot one
- if medicine is causing your hot flushes, talk to your GP about other ways you can take it to avoid this side effect

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