

Hot Flashes?

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Hot flashes are often the first symptom that women recognize as the approach of perimenopause and menopause. If you are having a few hot flashes and want to do what you can without prescription medicine to treat them, read on.

What you put in your mouth can help heat you up or cool you down!

Heating you up?

Some foods seem to trigger hot flashes. Perhaps as important as which foods women should eat to prevent hot flashes are those foods they should avoid. Many foods are thought to contribute to or worsen discomfort from hot flashes. Alcohol, caffeine, excess sugar, dairy products, meat products and spicy foods rank among the top aggravators of severe hot flashes as well as mood swings. Also, eating or drinking foods that are hot in temperature may trigger yet another hot flash that you might have avoided.

Foods that are obviously hot and spicy trigger the temperature regulation mechanism. If they bother you, skip them. Though we may not think of garlic as being “hot” in flavor, many women are sensitive and may want to eliminate or decrease garlic intake.

Let's cool down!

Phytoestrogens - Diet can have a lot to do with hot flashes. However, common foods in the Japanese diet may be useful in preventing hot flashes. These foods are high in phytoestrogens. Phytoestrogens are naturally-occurring plant chemicals that can act like the female hormone, estrogen. When naturally occurring, they are much weaker than the estrogen produced by your body.

Using soy to treat hot flashes is controversial. Though only a few medical studies support the use of soy, many women tell me that it helps them.

Small amounts of soy based foods are all that many women seem to need. Getting just 2 ounces of tofu or tempeh (a cake made from soybeans) a day can help prevent hot flashes from coming back. Or you could have a bowl of miso soup, which is flavored with a salty condiment made from soybeans and salt. Soy based shakes are another alternative and are easy to find premixed or you may want to mix your own.

Beans, especially soybeans, contain the compounds genistein and daidzein, which are estrogenic and may help control hot flashes. Only 7 percent of menopausal Japanese women suffer from hot flashes, as compared to 55 percent of women living in the United States. In fact, there is no Japanese word for "hot flashes". The Japanese diet is also low in fat and high in soy products such as tofu. For some women, especially those who have elected to avoid estrogen therapy, adding two to three teaspoons of soy protein to their daily diet can ease the discomfort and debilitating feelings of hot flashes. Soy protein (found at the health food store) can be added to breakfast cereal or mixed with beverages. Soy nuts are also readily available. Most women seem to like them. Soy may provide relief for those who aren't ready to start estrogen replacement therapy or replacement therapy with "natural" hormone compounds.

Black beans, can be added to soups or sprinkled into salads. They contain about the same amount of phytoestrogens as soybeans. Ground flaxseed, which can be baked into bread and muffins, is also a good source.

Calcium, magnesium and foods high in vitamin E -- like cold-pressed oils, green leafy vegetables, nuts and almonds also seem to help keep the heat at bay.

But with any supplement, you need a quality product. If you are a great supplement label reader, go shopping for your products, relying on your own knowledge. However, you may want someone whose medical knowledge or supplement label reading skill you can trust. Let them make a brand recommendation.

Vitamin B6, 100 milligrams, may prevent hot flashes and reduce Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS)

Lifestyle changes can also help ease hot flashes. These changes are the changes that seem to help about everything you can think of..... regular exercise and quitting smoking.

If these simple measures are not helpful, you need contact your health care provider for other suggestions, including prescription medications. My patients are often ready to consider hormone replacement therapy. The overwhelming majority of them are very happy with the Bio-identical hormones.

To learn more about perimenopause and menopause management, the CD, Prepare and Defend, is available from this website or from Richardson's Custom Rx; contact information is listed under 'Related Links' on the home page.