



MANAGING HOT FLASHES

Sometimes when a young woman undergoes treatment for breast cancer, that treatment can cause or mimic menopause. These changes may happen for a short time, or may persist longer. Menopause (the change of life) is the body's response to having less of female hormones as a woman gets older (or is treated for breast cancer). Symptoms include hot flashes, problems sleeping, vaginal dryness, and infections of the vagina and urinary tract. A greater risk for bone loss and heart disease also comes with menopause. Chemotherapy can bring on an early menopause (change of life). Other times, women may cease menstruating for a short time, and have these symptoms during that time. Since its onset is more rapid, menopause caused by chemotherapy tends to cause more severe symptoms than natural menopause. If you are having change of life symptoms due to aging or as a result of treatment, here are a few tips that may help you:

Since estrogen helps some breast cancers to grow, Hormone Replacement Therapy (sometimes referred to as HRT) is generally NOT suggested for breast cancer patients. Be sure all your doctors are aware you are a breast cancer survivor. Talk to your doctors (primary doctor, gynecologist *and* oncologist) before taking any medicines or herbs to help with any symptoms you are having. You may hear of products that are said to be safe to use instead of hormones. Some act in the body like estrogen. Their safety after breast cancer has not been shown. Additionally, talk to your doctor about eating or drinking food made from soy. They contain phyto-estrogens, meaning they can act in the body like estrogen.

If you are having problems with hot flashes or excessive sweating:

- **If your hot flashes really bother you, talk to your doctor. There are medicines that help with hot flashes and are safe after breast cancer.**



Copyright © 2016 BCEI

Used with the permission of the Young Breast Cancer Survivorship Network



MANAGING HOT FLASHES

Medications such as Effexor® have been shown to reduce hot flashes for breast cancer survivors.

- **Dress in layers** so you can remove them at the first sign of a flash.
- **Dress in loose clothing** made of natural fibers (cotton).
- **Drink a glass of cold water** or juice at the start of a flash.
- **Keep a spray bottle and fan nearby** so you can mist and fan yourself to cool down quickly.
- **At night**, keep a thermos of ice water or an ice pack by your bed, and sleep with a fan on the nightstand or keep the ceiling fan on.
- **Use cotton sheets and night gowns or pajamas** to let your skin “breathe.” Be sure you can remove layers of covers as well.
- **Avoid hot spicy foods and alcohol.** They start hot flashes in some people.
- **Keep a diary** of your hot flashes. Note the time of day and what you were doing prior to the hot flash. You may be able to find what triggers your hot flashes. If you find something that you do or eat is a trigger, then avoid it.
- **Exercise** regularly.
- **Try stress relief techniques.**
- **Vitamin E** seems to help some women with hot flashes, but it can be toxic in high doses. Always talk to your doctor about what dose is right for you before you try Vitamin E supplements.
- **Vitamin B12 tablets** also seem to help some women with hot flashes, but as with any medication, discuss with your doctor before beginning a new medication.
- **At night**, try sleeping with your covers un tucked. This will allow you to get your hands and/or feet out of the cover, as soon as you feel a hot flash coming on. You have heard that you lose most of your body heat from your hands and feet. That is why this helps some women.
- **Acupuncture** has been shown to help women who suffer with hot flashes by reducing their intensity and occurrence.



Copyright © 2016 BCEI

Used with the permission of the Young Breast Cancer Survivorship Network



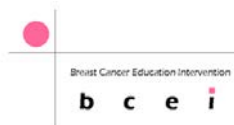
MANAGING HOT FLASHES

When Do You Need to Seek Help?

Talk to your doctors or nurses if your hot flashes bother you and you have tried the tips listed above.

Useful websites:

- <http://www.breastcancer.org/tips/menopausal/treat/hot-flashes>
- <https://www.verywell.com/top-ways-to-cope-with-hot-flashes-430260>



Copyright © 2016 BCEI

Used with the permission of the Young Breast Cancer Survivorship Network