

20. Hot flushes

Hot flushes are described as a sudden unpleasant sensation of burning heat across the face, neck and/or chest. They can cause reddening of the skin and sometimes drenching sweats. Their frequency can vary from one or two per week, to ten or more in one day. They can be a side effect of some cancer treatments such as those for breast cancer or prostate cancer and are particularly associated with hormone treatments. Generally the frequency of hot flushes will decrease over time. Hot flushes are the most commonly reported menopausal symptom triggered by low oestrogen levels, but they remain poorly understood. They can be so severe, however, as to cause intense night sweats that interfere with sleep and necessitate a change in bed linen.

How can I manage my hot flushes?

- If your hot flushes feel more like a fever then read the section on **High temperatures or fever** elsewhere in this directory. **If you feel unwell and have a fever it is essential that you see your GP or Clinical Nurse Specialist for advice as soon as possible.**
- Treatment such as Hormone Replacement Therapy is available for hot flushes caused by hormone changes though of course this needs to be discussed with your oncologist as it may not be possible in all cases.
- Changes to diet can also help with symptoms (e.g. some people find drinking caffeinated drinks like tea and coffee, or alcohol make the symptoms worse).
- Other lifestyle changes such as drinking more water, taking more exercise, quitting smoking and reducing consumption of certain foods and drinks that bring on a hot flush (e.g. spicy foods) can also reduce the likelihood that medication is needed.
- Wearing clothes such as cotton can help with symptoms as well as wearing several layers so that one could be taken off as necessary.
- Relaxation techniques can be extremely helpful in reducing the effects of a hot flush. Slow breathing and mental distraction techniques may also be useful.
- There are many complementary therapies used to treat hot flushes such as; black cohosh, evening primrose, sage tea or soy derivatives. **However, always check with your doctor before taking any preparations because some can make the situation worse and can interfere with the effect of some chemotherapy drugs**
- Some people find that therapies like acupuncture or reflexology help.
- If the hot flushes are caused by medications, they will stop when the medication is stopped.
- Discuss your symptoms with your doctor who may be able to offer a prescription for you should this be appropriate. There has been some reported evidence that the use of some antidepressants may be beneficial for some people

Living With and Beyond Cancer Information Sheet

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- Resources/Information

Local Resources:

<p>Menopause Café Boston Tea Party Barnstaple 5.00—6.00pm the last Thursday of the month</p>	<p>For anyone interested in sharing their stories, experiences and questions about menopause. This group is facilitated by the Barnstaple & District branch of Soroptimist International.</p>
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National Resources:

<p>NHS 111</p>	<p>Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.</p>
<p>NHS Website</p>	<p>Online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing.</p>
<p>Prostate Cancer UK www.prostatecanceruk.org</p>	<p>If you are on hormone therapy for prostate cancer you may experience hot flushes. Visit the Prostate UK website for support.</p>
<p>Macmillan Cancer Support Line www.macmillan.org.uk Call 0808 808 00 00 — 7 days a week 8.00am—8.00pm</p>	<p>Calls are free of charge from all consumer landlines and mobile phones plus all mobile networks. Please note that calls to this number are not free when made from outside the UK. If you are calling from outside of the UK call on +44 207 091 2230</p>
<p>Macmillan on-line Community</p>	<p>Online support— to share experiences or vent your emotions find others who understand—join today!</p>
<p>Marie Curie Support Line — Living with a terminal illness and looking for support www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/support/marie-curie-support</p>	<p>Calls are free of charge from all consumer landlines and mobile phones plus all mobile networks. The Support Line is open 8am – 6pm Monday to Friday and 11am – 5pm Saturday</p>

Other Resources :

<p>Macmillan Booklets:</p>	<p>Cancer and complementary therapies PDF— MAC11645 Complementary & Natural Healthcare Council (CNHC) Correct Tel: 020 3668 0406</p>
	<p>Managing the symptoms of cancer MAC11671</p>
	<p>How are you feeling? PDF— MAC11593_E05_N</p>
	<p>Understanding chemotherapy MAC11619_E15</p>
	<p>Understanding radiotherapy PDF— MAC11640_E12_N</p>