Hot Flashes and Sweating

Sweating, night sweats, and hot flashes can be side effects of cancer and its treatment. It’s important to know why they might happen and what can help to relieve them.

What Are Hot Flashes and Sweating?

Get information about what to expect if your treatment might cause sweating or hot flashes.

Managing Hot Flashes and Sweating

Learn what you can do to help manage and cope with hot flashes and sweating.

What Are Hot Flashes and Sweating?

- Sweating
- Hot flashes
- What to look for

In people with cancer, certain conditions and medications can cause sweating, hot flashes, or night sweats. They happen when your body tries to lower its temperature. They can happen even when the area around you or the room you’re in is cool.

- **Sweating** is also known as perspiring. Sweat, or perspiration, is the fluid created by the sweat glands in the body when heat is given off through skin.
- **Hot flashes** can cause sweating which can range from mild to excessive. Sometimes these are called hot flushes.
- **Night sweats** are sweating and hot flashes that mostly happen when you're sleeping.

**Sweating**

Sweating is your body's way to lower its temperature. It normally happens when your body is exposed to heat, after exercise, because of hormone changes, or when people are feeling anxious and stressed. If you are sick, having a fever can also cause sweating. In people with cancer, sweating can also be caused by a fever, a tumor, or cancer treatment.

**Hot flashes**

Hot flashes involve sweating, but can be described as a sensation of heat or flushing. They might include flushing in the face or may be described as heat in other areas of the body. People who have hot flashes describe them as ranging from feeling just a sensation of warmth with mild sweat to having chills and enough perspiration to soak your clothes or bedding. If hot flashes are moderate to severe, sometimes you might have problems sleeping and fatigue, too.

Hot flashes often normally occur in women because of hormone changes during menopause. In women being treated with [hormone therapy for breast cancer](https://www.cancer.org/treatment/hormone-therapy-for-breast-cancer.html), hot flashes can have different severity and can be long-lasting.

Hot flashes can also occur in women being treated for other cancers with methods known to have early menopause or temporary hormone changes as a side effect. These hot flashes might be temporary or long-lasting depending on the treatment given.

Men being treated for prostate cancer who have [surgery](https://www.cancer.org/treatment/surgery-for-prostate-cancer.html) and [androgen suppression therapy](https://www.cancer.org/treatment/androgen-suppression-therapy-for-prostate-cancer.html) may have hot flashes for a period of time that might eventually go away. If your treatment plan includes any of these treatments or if you are having hot flashes, talk to your cancer care team so they can assess your specific situation.

**What to look for**

- Feeling unusually hot in one or more areas of your body.
- Having wet or damp skin any time of day, including during the night or waking up to find sheets damp.
- Fever followed by heavy sweating as the body temperature goes back down
- Chilling or shaking chills
- Drenching sweats even when there’s no fever or the area around you doesn’t seem overly hot.

**Hyperlinks**


**References**


Managing Hot Flashes and Sweating

- Medicines
- Lifestyle changes
- What the patient can do
- What caregivers can do

Managing hot flashes and sweating might include taking medicines to treat the underlying cause of the symptoms, if possible, or medicines to help with the symptoms themselves. Making certain lifestyle changes might be helpful as well. Talk to your cancer care team about the right treatment for you.

Medicines

Sometimes medicines can be used to help with hot flashes. These can be classified as either non-hormone therapy or hormone therapy. Because every person’s situation is different, it’s important to talk to your cancer care team about what might be best for you.

Non-hormone therapy
Prescription medications, such as low doses of certain anti-depressant and high blood pressure medicines, as well as some other medicines, have been shown to help with hot flashes in some people.

Over-the-counter medications, such as fever reducers or mild pain relievers, might be recommended by your cancer care team.

Certain vitamins, minerals, and other supplements have been suggested as being helpful for sweating and hot flashes. Some might help, but it's important to talk with your doctor about whether they are safe for you to take.

Hormone therapy

Medicines containing hormones might be prescribed to replace the hormones that have been lost because of surgery or other treatments. Whether this might be an option for you depends on the type and stage of your cancer, as well as other factors. It's important to talk with your doctor about your situation, about the pros and cons of taking these drugs, and the side effects they might cause if your treatment plan includes them.

Lifestyle changes

Lifestyle changes that might be helpful in reducing hot flashes or sweating for some people include:

- Losing weight
- Being physically active
- Therapies such as acupuncture, massage, yoga, and cognitive behavioral interventions
- Avoiding certain foods that might trigger hot flashes, such as spicy foods
- Avoiding alcohol and tobacco

What the patient can do

Take medicine to reduce fever, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), if your health care team says it's OK for you to do so. Depending on what is causing your sweating or hot flashes, there may be different ways you can help manage them.

- Take all medicines as prescribed.
- Talk to your doctor before trying any over-the-counter medicine, or any vitamin,
mineral, or nutritional supplement that you think might help.

- Talk to your doctor if your antiperspirant or deodorant is not working well.
- Track episodes of sweating and hot flashes.
- If your sweating is from fevers, take and track your temperature as instructed.
- Dress in 2 layers of clothing in cooler temperatures. The layer on the inside will act as a wick to pull moisture up and away from the skin. The layers on the outside can be removed as needed.
- Change wet clothes and bed linens as soon as you can.
- Take good care of your skin and use good personal hygiene. For example, if you’re sweating a lot, bathe or shower at least once a day and put on a moisturizer as needed to soothe your skin and for good hygiene.

What caregivers can do

- Help the patient take and track their temperature, if needed.
- Help the patient keep track of any sweating episodes.
- Help the patient change wet clothes and bed linens.
- Check the patient’s temperature by mouth a few times a day and in the evening.
- Offer extra liquids to replace the fluid that’s lost through sweat.
- Offer to help the patient bathe or shower if needed.

Call the cancer care team if the patient

- Becomes dehydrated from frequent soaking sweats
- Has a fever of 100.5°F or higher than usual for them or higher than a level instructed by the cancer care team (when taken by mouth) for more than 24 hours
- Has tremors or shaking chills that don't go away

Hyperlinks

References


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