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Hot Flashes and Sweating

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?

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](#)¹, 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](#)² and [androgen suppression therapy](#)³ 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

1. www.cancer.org/cancer/breast-cancer/treatment/hormone-therapy-for-breast-cancer.html
2. www.cancer.org/cancer/prostate-cancer/treating/surgery.html
3. www.cancer.org/cancer/prostate-cancer/treating/hormone-therapy.html

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Managing Hot Flashes and Sweating

Managing [hot flashes and sweating](#) includes medications to treat the underlying cause of the symptoms, if possible, and medications to help with the symptoms themselves. Managing them also means helping the patient feel more comfortable and finding ways to relieve them. Talk to your cancer care team about the right treatment for you.

Medications

How hot flashes and sweating are managed depends on what's causing them. Sometimes medications can be used and sometimes lifestyle changes might help. These can be classified as either non-hormone therapy and hormone therapy. Because every patient is different, it's important to talk to your cancer care team about what is best for your situation.

Non-hormone therapy

- Prescription medications: low doses of certain anti-depressant, anti-seizure, and high blood pressure medications have been shown to help control hot flashes
- Over-the-counter medications, such as fever reducers or mild pain relievers, or vitamins and other supplements that are recommended by your cancer care team.
- Therapies, such as massage, acupuncture, yoga, and cognitive behavioral interventions.
- Lifestyle changes, such as weight management and avoiding alcohol and tobacco.

Hormone therapy

Medication to replace hormones that have decreased because of surgery or other treatment may be prescribed. This depends on the type and stage of cancer you have, as well as other tests that are done on your tumor when it's diagnosed. 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.

There are vitamins, minerals, and other supplements that claim to help with sweating and hot flashes. Some can be helpful, but it's important to talk with your doctor about whether they are safe for you to take.

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 to manage them.

- Take all medications 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 anti-perspirant 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.
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- 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](#)¹ from frequent soaking sweats
- Has [fever](#)² 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 last

Hyperlinks

1. www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/physical-side-effects/fluids-and-dehydration.html
2. www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/physical-side-effects/fever.html

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