

Hot Flash in the Cold of Winter



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A patient once described a hot flash as a sudden rush of heat that required her to walk outside in the freezing cold of winter to seek relief. Hot flashes are a common symptom of menopause. Not only are they uncomfortable, but hot flashes can also interfere with your sleep.

Menopause

Approximately 40 million American women are post-menopausal. By 2010, it is estimated that the number of post-menopausal women will rise to 60 million. Menopause is the permanent cessation of menstruation (period) following the loss of ovarian activity. Women who have not had a menstrual period for a year are considered postmenopausal. Women who are going through menopause are called perimenopausal.

Hot Flashes

Hot flashes occur in 75% of menopausal women. Therefore, if four menopausal women were sitting at a café having a cup of green tea, three of them would have hot flashes. During a hot flash, the skin feels red and hot, there is profuse perspiration lasting 30 seconds to five minutes, and in some cases, the hot flashes may be followed by chills. In most cases, hot flashes usually last for two years.

Sure they're uncomfortable, but did you know they can affect your sleep?

Nocturnal Hot Flashes

A community-based survey of women's health and menopausal symptoms was conducted on a multiethnic sample of 12,603 Caucasian, African American, Chinese, Japanese and Hispanic women aged 40 to 55 years. The women were asked whether they had experienced difficulty sleeping in the two weeks before the survey.

Difficulty sleeping was reported by 38% of women, mostly by late perimenopausal women. According to the researchers, menopausal status was significantly associated with difficulty sleeping. Vasomotor symptoms, such as hot flashes, also were significantly associated with difficulty sleeping.

Menopausal Support

When treating a menopausal patient, it is always important to focus on osteoporosis prevention, heart disease prevention and managing the symptoms of menopause, such as hot flashes. In the case of hot flashes, the herb black cohosh was shown to be effective in treating this condition.

Black cohosh

A study was conducted in 80 menopausal women where one half of the group received black cohosh and the other received a placebo. After 12 weeks, the incidence of hot flashes significantly improved with treatment of black cohosh, where 4.9 hot flashes per day decreased to 0.7 hot flashes per day. The researchers concluded that black cohosh was an effective and well-tolerated treatment option for menopausal woman with hot flash symptoms.