

## Title: Hot Flashes at Night: Everything You Need to Know

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For some of us, it's a familiar feeling ... that slow heat creeping up your arms, chest, neck, and face. Your heart begins to race and suddenly beads of sweat break out all over your body. And just as quickly as it began ... it fades away, leaving behind a red, flushed face, chilly skin, and damp clothes in its wake. The dreaded **hot flashes!**

*Hot flashes have been nicknamed 'personal summers' by many women"*  
***Kiarra King, M.D (OBGyn)***

[80% of women](#) are affected by **hot flashes** as they begin to approach **menopause**, and most experience **hot flashes at night**. A common side effect is the excessive sweating, or **night sweats**, which leads to disturbed sleep. While an episode can come and go within five minutes, it does take a long time for the body to cool down afterwards. Data also shows that women on average tend to experience **hot flashes with night sweats** [for around 7 years](#), while they go through **menopause**.

### Why do hot flashes happen at night?

Often, **hot flashes** occur **at night only**, with increased intensity and frequency. Hormones like estrogen and progesterone that are responsible for controlling body temperature, tend to fluctuate rapidly in the night, causing **hot flashes when sleeping**. The feeling of intense heat that causes excessive night sweats, even if the surrounding temperature is normal, is characteristic of hot flashes. The sweating may be so intense that it causes women to wake up several times in the night.

### What causes hot flashes at night?

Hot flashes occur when the body's thermostat- a section of the brain known as the hypothalamus- becomes extremely sensitive to even slight changes in the body's temperature. When hormones like estrogen begin to fall, the brain begins to think that the body is too warm and sets off a chain reaction, to cool it down quickly. This is **what causes hot flashes at**

**night** – with the blood vessels in the skin dilating and increased sweating, which is then followed by chills. **Hot flashes at night causes** “night sweats” which are often intense and frequent enough to disturb sleeping patterns.

The most common cause of hormonal fluctuations, especially a dip in estrogen levels, is **menopause**. However, there are other lesser-known causes that may go unnoticed, and tend to affect both men and women.

## 1. Leading Cause: Menopause

*The first indication of menopause is a broken thermostat.” — Dorothea Benton Frank, Sullivan's Island*

When a woman’s childbearing years wind down, it comes hand in hand with extreme fluctuations in female sex hormones like estrogen and progesterone. This causes many of the dreaded symptoms of menopause, like the mood swings, depression, anxiety, weight gain, lethargy, and erratic bleeding during monthly periods, until they come to a complete stop. The most common complaint, however, **is hot flashes at night**, which give rise to **night sweats**.

While women begin to transition [into menopause in their 40s](#), it can start earlier in some people due to hysterectomy (a surgery to remove the uterus due to cancer, fibroids or other diseases), trauma or accidents and in some cases, as a side effect of chemotherapy or radiation for cancer. These conditions bring about the same fluctuations in hormone levels and result in symptoms like menopause, including **hot flashes at night**.

## 2. Looking beyond Menopause

### a. The Troublesome Thyroid

According to the [American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists \(AACE\)](#), millions of women going through menopause, even those on estrogen supplements, may be suffering from a *thyroid disease*, that may not have been diagnosed yet. The symptoms of both are similar, with lethargy, mood swings and disturbed sleep.

Overactivity of the [thyroid gland](#), called *hyperthyroidism*, can also cause sweating and flushing and is also one of the most overlooked causes of **hot flashes at night, that is not menopause**.

### b. Not So Sweet: Fluctuating Blood Sugar Levels

Low blood sugar or [hypoglycemia](#) that may be caused due to insufficient intake, or changes in diabetes medications like insulin, are also known to induce sweating and rapid heart rate followed by chills.

### c. Caffeine Consumption

Tea, coffee, or other [caffeinated drinks](#) taken after dinner or closer to bedtime, does make the frequency and intensity of hot flashes increase, especially at night.

### d. Warm Sleeping environments

Synthetic [clothing and heavy blankets](#) make the body temperature warmer and invariably makes **hot flashes at night** even more uncomfortable, especially in rooms which are under ventilated.

**e. The Big C: Night sweats associated with cancer**

[Lymphoma](#) is most associated with increased sweating and may mimic **hot flashes at night**. Women with [breast cancer](#) who take tamoxifen for treatment, also experience hot flashes and night sweats.

**f. Medication Maladies: The side effects of drugs**

Studies have shown that around [8-22% of people](#) taking antidepressants suffer from night sweats. Even medications taken for fever like aspirin may also cause night sweats and flushing.

### 3. Equality of the Sexes: Men with hot flashes!

Recent evidence shows that even men experience hot flashes at night. While women experience a sudden dip in hormones as they age, men experience a more gradual decline, with a [2% drop in testosterone every year](#), after they enter their 30s. Studies also show that 80% of men who undergo [androgen deprivation therapy](#) for prostate cancer, suffer through **hot flashes at night**.

#### Why are hot flashes worse at night?

Studies show that **hot flashes are worse at night**, because of the sudden change in hormone levels that occur once the sun sets. These fluctuations trigger new and more intense **hot flashes** and **night sweats**, at an alarming frequency of about one every hour, **overnight**.

*Hot flashes are the prime cause of sleep disruption in women over age fifty.” [Suzanne Woodward](#) of Wayne State University School of Medicine*

As a result of poor sleep, women often get up feeling tired and lethargic. They are more prone to mood swings and tend to be irritable. Disturbed sleep affects both [mental and physical health](#), from headaches, to high blood pressure. After a while, the jolts of caffeinated energy from unending cups of coffee ... just stop working the next day!

It is necessary to address this issue as disturbed sleeping patterns can slowly become a bad habit that sticks around long after the hot flashes subside ... a bad habit that becomes notoriously hard to break.

#### How can we stop hot flashes at night?

The intensity and severity of menopause symptoms may vary amongst women. Those who experience a lot of difficulty are usually prescribed [hormone replacement therapy \(HRT\)](#) to maintain optimum levels of estrogen and progesterone.

While medications may help in reducing hot flashes due to menopause and other hormone related causes, many people are seeking alternative solutions as they look at **how to control**

**hot flashes at night.** Lifestyle changes are known to help with many of the other reasons for night sweats.

Here are some **natural remedies for hot flashes at night.**

## 1. Controlling Environments

Keeping room temperatures cool by putting on the air conditioning, turning on the fan or leaving the door and windows open for great ventilation, go a long way in providing a comfort environment for people who suffer from hot flashes.

Another factor to consider, is the bedding and pillows that are used while sleeping. Blankets, sheets, and pajamas made from cool, moisture wicking material like linen, cotton, or wool, make people feel cooler and they tend to avoid waking up due to **hot flashes at night.**

## 2. Avoiding Triggers

Common [hot flash triggers](#) that are known for causing increasing body temperatures, should be avoided to get a break from hot flashes at night.

- Alcohol
- Smoking
- Spicy food
- Obesity and weight gain
- Stress
- Red wine
- Hot baths in the evenings
- Tight clothing

## 3. Supplementing Diets

Hot flashes come on with such intensity that people have been known to chew ice chips just to cool their bodies down rapidly to feel better. While this may be a quick fix, supplementing daily diets have shown to have more long-lasting effects.

[Plant estrogens](#) are found in soy products and are known to balance the decline of natural estrogens in the body. This reduces the drastic effect estrogen deficiency and reduces the severity of hot flashes. Foods like soyabean, tofu, edamame and black cohosh are estrogen rich food that may be helpful. In addition, vitamin B complex, vitamin E and primrose oil also provide relief.

## 4. Mind over matter

Meditation and deep [breathing exercises](#), like slow abdominal breathing over 6-8 breaths per minute, have also helped people cope with hot flashes. Cardio exercises like walking, swimming, cycling, and dancing during the day are great mood boosters and hormone regulators, which can keep **hot flashes at night** to minimum.

Steamy nights filled with night sweats and hot flashes, sounds like a recipe for disaster, especially if we have to deal with it for years together. Minor changes in daily routines and **natural remedies for hot flashes at night**, have brought about life changing results for many people looking to escape these symptoms, and we should considered these before medications, that may have its own side effects.

Taking control of the temperature of your surroundings, is a quick an easy way to alleviate **hot flashes at night and** improve the quality of your sleep. Check out a cool pillow that helps you cool down to fall asleep faster ... and stay asleep, while keeping hot flashes and night sweats away!