

RADIATION ONCOLOGY

HOT FLASHES



Hot flashes are the most common symptom of menopause, as well as a side effect of some medications. You may have entered menopause naturally, surgically, or as a result of chemotherapy and/or hormonal treatments. The hot flash is commonly described as a sudden feeling of intense heat in the chest, neck, and face accompanied by perspiration, which might be uncomfortable. These usually last 3 to 5 minutes, then gradually subside. Hot flashes are usually worse in hot weather and may be triggered by alcohol, spicy foods or stress. Usually, they are temporary, lasting from months to years.

Vitamins:

1. **Vitamin E:** Take 800-1000 IU a day. It is available over the counter. Take with food. This could take 4-6 weeks to see results. Side effects include: headache, fatigue, cramping and/or diarrhea.
2. **Evening Primrose (Borage Oil):** Take 1-2, 500 mg tablets daily. It is available over the counter. Headaches are a possible side effect. Do not use it if you are on seizure medication.
3. **Vitamin B6:** 50-100 mg tablet, take 1-2 tablets three times daily. It is available over counter.

Prescription Medications:

Non-hormonal medications

1. **Antidepressants:** Several antidepressants have been shown to lessen hot flashes.
Effexor (venlafaxine): dose range 37.5mg to 150mg daily. Best dosage seems to be 75mg.
Prozac (fluoxetine) 20 mg daily.
Side effects may include fatigue, dizziness, dry mouth, nausea. If side effects are mild, they usually improve with time. Do not stop these medications suddenly.
2. **Neurontin®** (gabapentin): Usually used for treatment of neurological conditions. Dose range from 100-300 mg daily.
3. **Clonidine:** This is a high blood pressure medication, comes in pill or patch. Usual dose is 0.1mg daily. Side effects include low blood pressure, dry mouth, and drowsiness.