



# MANAGING HOT FLUSHES

Your guide to managing hot flushes during the menopause transition with practical, proven tools for you to try out, shared by our team of specialists



# HOT FLUSHES AND MENOPAUSE

Hot flushes and night sweats are often referred to by clinicians as 'vasomotor symptoms' and around 70–80% of women in Western cultures will experience them during perimenopause.

Flushes are caused by fluctuations in plasma oestrogen which reduce the brain's ability to regulate temperature effectively. We become more sensitive to changes in heat or cold which can trigger the body to generate excess heat leading to flushing and sweating, but it can also make us feel chilly and shivery.

Hot flushes can cause embarrassment for some, whilst night sweats disrupt sleep, and over time affect our mood and outlook towards the menopause transition.

Chat to your clinician about the options that are right for you to help alleviate these symptoms.

For those that can take Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT), this is 95% effective in reducing hot flushes. For those with contraindications, on SSRIs (antidepressants) or not finding that HRT is helping, this workbook will provide you with some alternative and lifestyle options.



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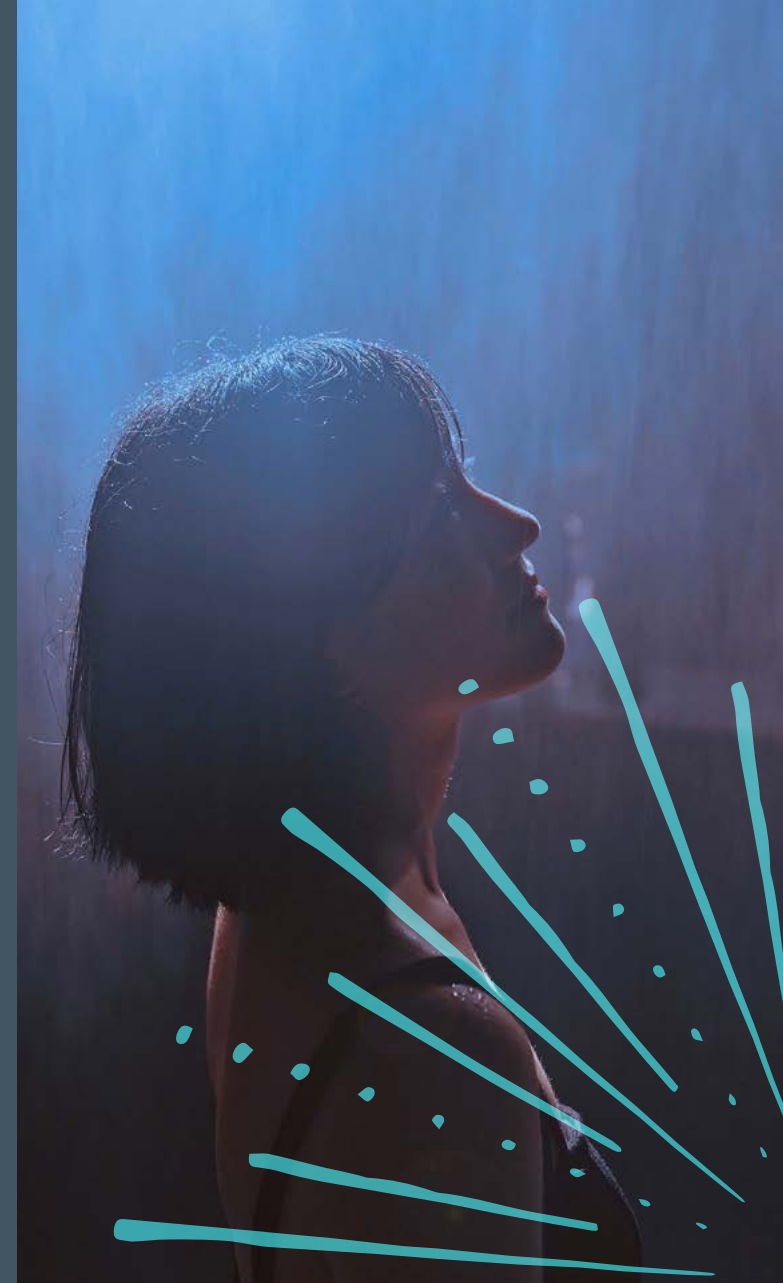
# WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE?

Hot flushes are experienced in different ways.

Some talk about an aura – an uneasy feeling or warning that happens just before they get a flush. Others talk about heat rising from one part of the body and spreading upwards, either beginning at the feet, fingertips or chest.

The length of time a flush lasts differs from person to person. For some it can be a minute but feel much longer, for others the flush can last several minutes or seconds.

However, most hot flushes are an intense sensation of heat that begins with a tingling feeling.



# HOT FLUSH MYTHS

There are various myths around hot flushes, so it's worth taking note of these to avoid making matters worse ...

## Hot flushes are solely hormonal

There may be other reasons for hot flushes such as an overactive thyroid, tuberculosis or insulin resistance, as well as lifestyle factors, which are covered later.

## Hot flushes are the first symptom you'll experience during your menopause transition

Most women experience hot flushes later on in their menopause transition - other changes such as brain fog, poor sleep or weight gain are more likely to come first.

## All women get hot flushes

It's estimated that around 25% of women will not experience hot flushes and if you are on HRT, managing stress, eating well, moving daily and sleeping well, you may not experience any noticeable flushes.



# NON-HORMONAL TRIGGERS

There are various triggers to hot flushes. The next part of the workbook will help you Identify and eliminate these!

## **Mental stress**

Anxiety, anger, tension, feeling embarrassed, rushing around.


## **Body stress**

Excess weight, smoking, alcohol, caffeine, processed food, sugar, spicy food, skipping meals.

## **Environmental**

Hot or cold (room/drink/bathing), synthetic fibres, tight clothing.





**YOUR POWER  
TOOLS**



# 1 CONTROL YOUR THOUGHTS

Our thoughts and beliefs around hot flushes and menopause in general will influence our emotional response, which in turn directs our behaviour. Stress can trigger a hot flush or night sweat which may make us feel out of control and so a 'negative loop' can begin.

When our thoughts around hot flushes or night sweats are negative, this can trigger associated emotions of shame, anxiety, loss of control or grief. Negative thoughts may stem from limiting beliefs relating to self-esteem,

how others may interpret the situation, or imagined consequences from having a hot flush or night sweat.

If we can change our thoughts to be kinder, factual, or positive, we can feel calmer next time we experience a hot flush or night sweat.

This next section will give you some tools to help you reframe thoughts and have a more balanced perspective of your hot flush experience.

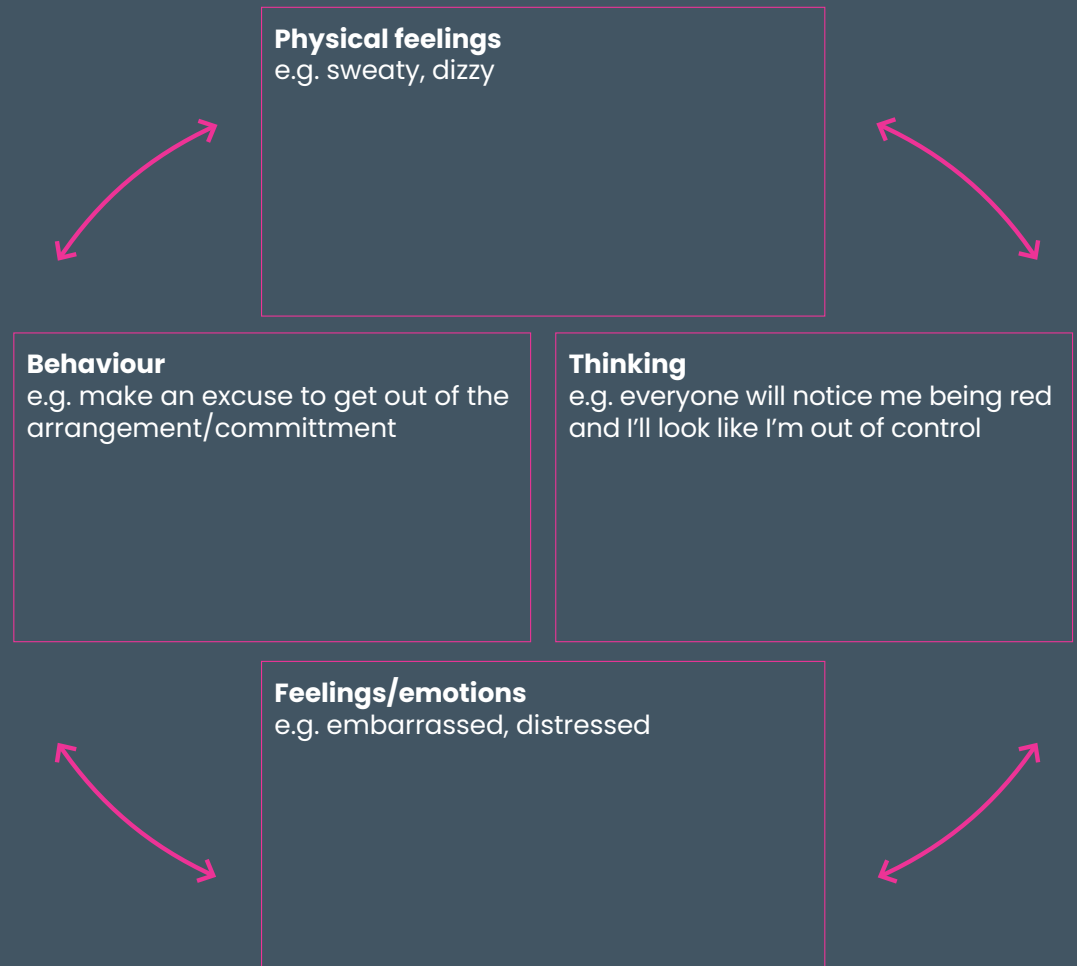


# NEGATIVE LOOP

Thoughts, feelings, sensations and behaviour are all interlinked. You have the power to break the chain and retrain your brain from an unhelpful to a helpful cycle.

This worksheet helps you identify limiting beliefs, so you can start to make transformative change.

Fill in the boxes to identify how you respond to different situations.





# REFRAME THINKING

Our mind is wired to think negatively, but a thought becomes a feeling and a feeling will influence our behaviour. To break away from negative narratives, try to reframe thoughts more positively or neutrally.

## ☆ Challenge

Think of a negative thought you have had recently in reaction to a hot flush or night sweat.

Now, rewrite this in a more positive or more balanced way – as if a friend was observing what really happened.

### From...

- ✧ I can't cope with this
- ✧ Everyone is looking at me
- ✧ This is out of control
- ✧ This is never going to end

### ... to

- ✧
- ✧
- ✧
- ✧



# THE SURVEY METHOD

To make you think about a more helpful way to approach your hot flushes and night sweats, ask people to tell you whether your associated thoughts and attitudes are realistic.

## Think about the following two questions ...

1. Would a friend agree 100% with this worried thought? If not, what advice might they give to help you approach the situation differently and more calmly?
2. Conversely, if a friend had this worry, would you agree with them and what advice would you give to help them cope? What would you suggest your friend changes about their thinking?



# THOUGHT BLOCKING

Did you know that we have around 70,000 thoughts a day but 80% of these are the same! We can get stuck in a negative narrative loop with the same thoughts repeating themselves. Here is a simple tool to help you stop the inner voice.

## Challenge

Next time you have a negative thought around hot flushes or night sweats, repeat the word 'the' every 2-3 seconds. It can be helpful to mouth 'the' without saying it.

Sounds too simple to be true but it really does work!





## 2

# RELAXATION TOOLS

It's important to carve out and prioritise 'me' time during menopause. Hot flushes and night sweats are aggravated when cortisol (our stress hormone) is high, so we need to find ways to trigger what's called the parasympathetic nervous system.

This tells the brain that we are safe and can unwind.

We can use props to relax, as well as use our own inner resources, such as the breath or movement to calm us down and reduce the frequency and intensity of flushes.



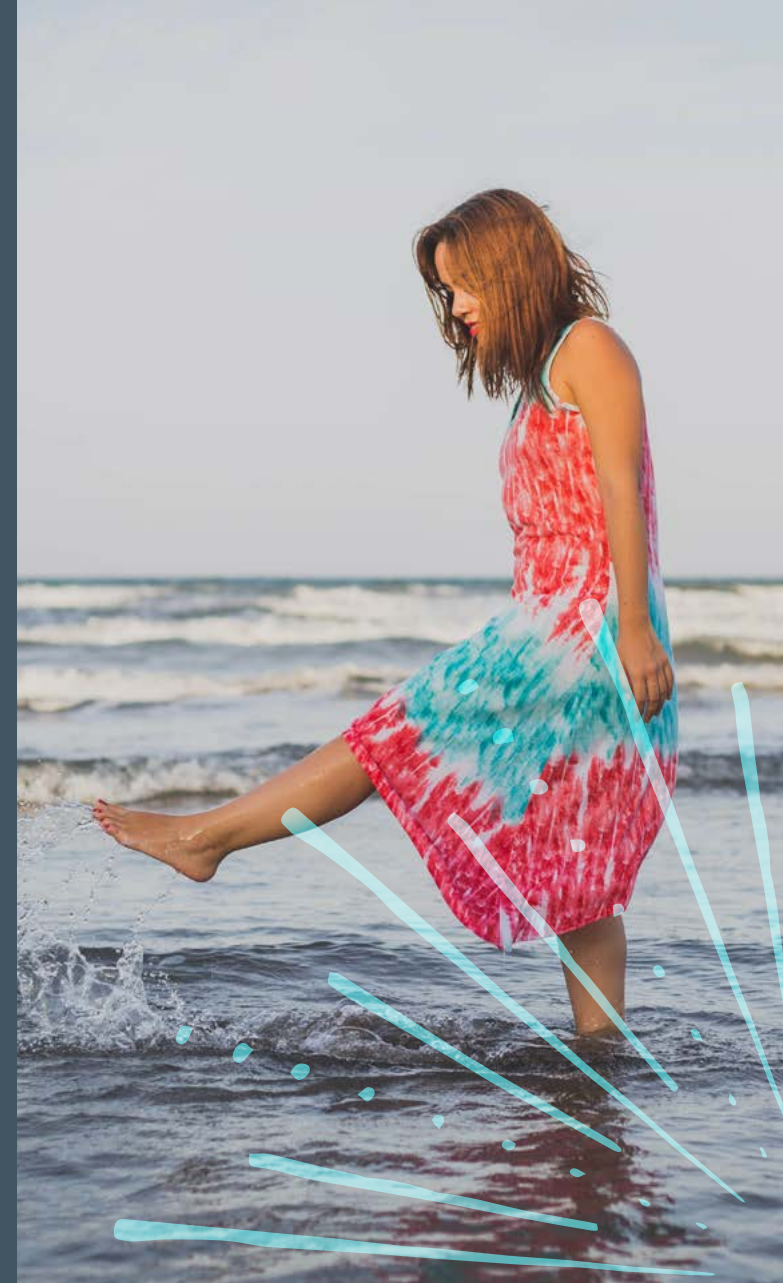
# HOT FLUSH VISUALISATION

As the brain doesn't distinguish between what's real or fantasy, we can manipulate our mind into believing we are cool.

## 🌟 Challenge

Next time you feel a hot flush or night sweat coming on, try this visualisation:

- ✦ Seat yourself in a comfortable position
- ✦ Take a few deep breaths in and out
- ✦ Imagine a cooling environment:
  - ✦ A waterfall
  - ✦ On top of a mountain
  - ✦ An icy rain or snow shower
  - ✦ A blustery wind blowing
  - ✦ Stepping into a cold ocean
- ✦ Allow the cold sensation to move through you
- ✦ Feel your body temperature start to drop
- ✦ Take deep breaths in and with each breath your temperature continues to fall
- ✦ You feel relaxed and cool



# PACED BREATHING

This is a useful tool to calm down the nervous system, helping with the onset of a hot flush, nausea, dizziness and palpitations.

## Challenge

Put one palm above your breasts on your collarbone and the other on your belly. Relax your shoulders, breathe slowly and deeply from your stomach. Concentrate on your breathing. Aim to do 6-8 breaths per minute, for 10 minutes.

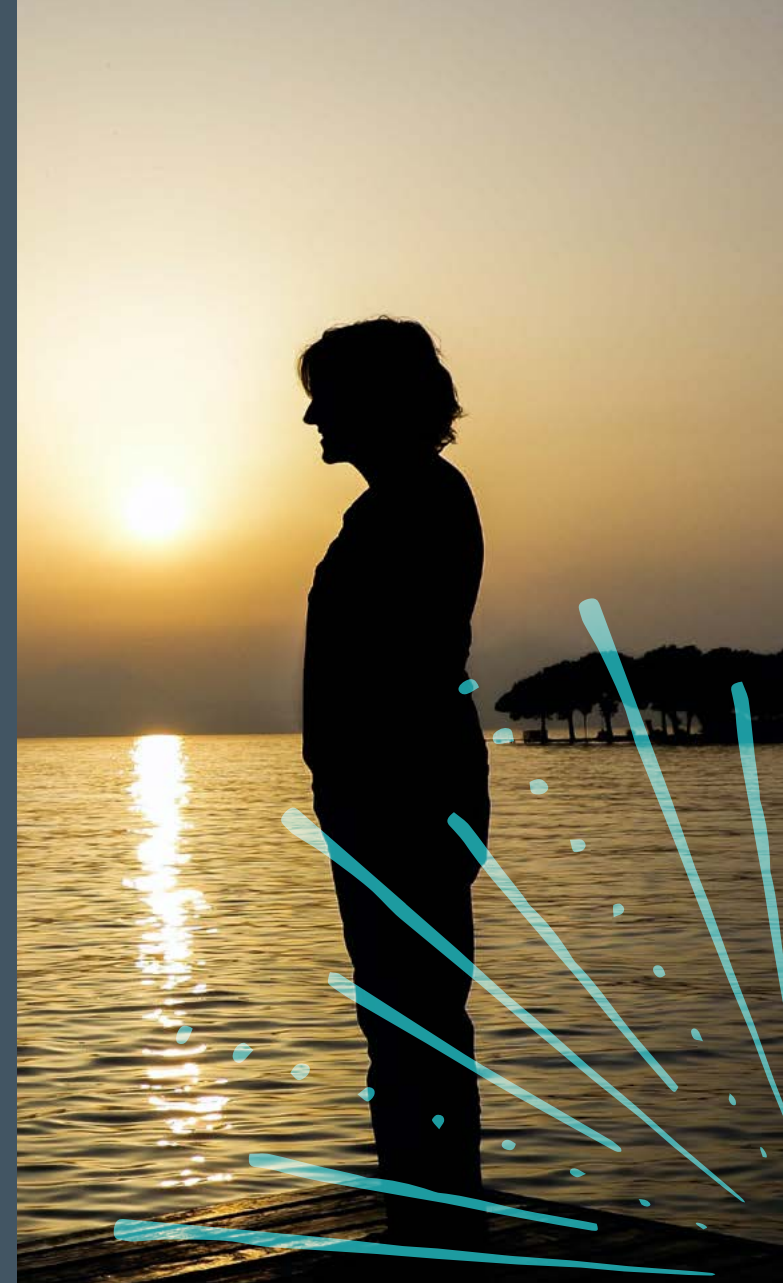


# PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

If you wake up in the middle of the night because of a night sweat, one way to calm yourself down is with an exercise called 'Progressive Muscle Relaxation'.

## Challenge

Start with your feet – tense all the muscles in one foot for a few seconds, and then release. Repeat this tensing, holding and relaxing, focusing on isolated parts of the body, working your way up, through to the shoulders, face and head. The whole exercise should last for about fifteen minutes, and should leave you feeling a lot more relaxed, and ready to sleep.





# COOLING ESSENTIAL OILS

Essential oils have been used through the ages and around the world as a tool to alter our mood.

## ☆ Challenge

Make your own 'Gone In a Flush' spray to help reduce the intensity and length of time of hot flushes and night sweats. Always use a high grade, therapeutic oil to notice a benefit.

### Ingredients

- ✦ 20 ml peppermint hydrosol
- ✦ 7 ml aloe vera gel
- ✦ 6 drops of spearmint
- ✦ 4 drops of geranium
- ✦ 5 drops of clary sage
- ✦ 3 drops of roman chamomile
- ✦ 8 drops of lemon
- ✦ 4 drops of cyprus

### Method

Mix the essential oils and aloe vera gel together and place in a 50 ml spritz container. Add peppermint hydrosol, place the lid on and shake well. Spray over the face, neck and chest at the onset of a hot flush.



# EXAMINE THE EVIDENCE

In this exercise you will put a thought on trial by acting as a defence lawyer, prosecutor and judge to determine the accuracy of the thought.

## Prosecution and defence

Gather evidence for and against your thought. Evidence can only be used if it's a verifiable fact. No interpretations, guesses or opinions!

## Judge

Come to a verdict regarding your thought. Is the thought accurate and fair? Are there other thoughts that could explain the facts?



# RESTORATIVE YOGA

A daily ritual repeated in the same way can help create a calming association. Restorative yoga helps us feel safe and has been linked to reducing hot flushes.

Get experimental and find something that works for you.





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# EAT STRATEGICALLY

Nutrition is a menopause power tool, giving our hormones a helping hand to restore balance.

Our body absorbs nutrients best through food rather than supplements. Making considered choices about what we eat will

help reduce stress in our mind and body and help reduce our hot flushes and night sweats.

Try to focus first on adding in healthier options to your diet before you start cutting out, as this helps new habits stick quicker.



# OMEGA GOODNESS

Various studies show that omega 3 fatty acids help reduce the frequency of hot flushes and night sweats. These fatty acids have a role to play in hormone transport and communication, helping hormone receptors work more effectively.

As well as avocado, walnuts, chia and flax seeds, oily fish is a key source of omega 3 and should be eaten 2-3 times a week.

## Challenge

Make a meal from our SMASH list:

Salmon

Mackerel

Anchovies

Sardines

Herring



# PHYTOESTROGENS

Phytoestrogens are plant-based compounds that mimic oestrogen and are believed to prevent or treat menopausal hot flushes and other symptoms associated with oestrogen depletion.

## Sources include:

- ✦ Wholegrains
- ✦ Seeds: flaxseed, sesame and sunflower seeds
- ✦ Nuts: almonds, cashews, hazelnuts
- ✦ Pulses: chickpeas, kidney beans, lentils
- ✦ Soya, tempeh, tofu (avoid if on Tamoxifen)





# PHYTOESTROGENS

## ☆ Challenge

Make your own hummus – a healthy snack or dip.

### Ingredients

- ✦ 3 tbsp lemon juice
- ✦ 1 clove garlic, halved lengthways
- ✦ 1 tsp sea salt flakes
- ✦ 400 g tin chickpeas, drained (reserve liquid)
- ✦ 6 tbsp tahini
- ✦ 1/4 tsp ground cumin
- ✦ 2 tbsp olive oil plus extra to serve
- ✦ Pinch of paprika

### Method

Put the lemon juice, garlic and salt in a bowl. Stir, then leave for 15 minutes so the garlic can flavour the lemon juice.

Tip the chickpeas into a food processor with 3 tbsp of liquid from the tin. Whizz until smooth-ish then add the lemon juice (discard the garlic), tahini, cumin and olive oil. Whizz again, adding a little more chickpea liquid until you have a dip-like texture. Drizzle with more oil and sprinkle with a little paprika before serving.





# HEALTHY GUT, HEALTHY MIND

There has been increasing evidence to show that our gut health has a profound effect on our mental health. The brain is connected to the gut through the vagus nerve. As we get older our gut bacteria become less balanced and this may affect our mood and trigger hot flushes and night sweats.



## Tip

Probiotics contain good bacteria, so try a kefir drink or kombucha, or fermented food such as kimchi, sauerkraut, probiotic yoghurt or tempeh.



# EAT HAPPY

Foods that contain the amino acid tryptophan convert into serotonin. When these foods are combined with complex carbs – wholegrains, quinoa, legumes – they can help reduce the anxiety that may trigger hot flushes.

Sources include bananas, pumpkin and sesame seeds, cheese, eggs, poultry and tomatoes.



## Challenge

Kick off your day with a sunshine omelette using two eggs, a sprinkle of grated Cheddar cheese and one chopped tomato. Once cooked, sprinkle with pumpkin seeds to serve.



# HYRD8

A drop in oestrogen can trigger hot flushes and night sweats. To combat this, drink eight glasses of water every day.

## Challenge

Replace dehydrating caffeinated drinks with herbal infusions, using hot water as a base. Here are some combinations to try:

- ✦ 1 cm slice of fresh ginger and a squeeze of fresh orange
- ✦ A slice of lemon and 1 star anise
- ✦ A sprig of fresh mint
- ✦ 1 tsp of apple cider vinegar, 1 cinnamon stick,
- ✦ 1 tsp of acacia/manuka honey





# BE SOBER CURIOUS

Alcohol is a trigger for hot flashes and night sweats. It expands the blood vessels sending a message to the brain to get rid of extra heat. Blood flow increases, generating heat under the skin. It also elevates cortisol, our stress hormone, which can intensify hot flashes.

Avoid alcohol midweek (Monday to Thursday) and note down how it makes you feel.

What else can you do – or substitute alcohol with – to give you the same wind-down effect?





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**OTHER**

**PREPARATIONS**

# TRY SOME ACUPRESSURE

Acupressure is a traditional Chinese medicine bodywork technique that shares the same practice as acupuncture. Pressure is applied to different meridian points on the body to create balance and improve metabolic energies in the body such as heat.

## Challenge

Next time you feel a hot flush or night sweat coming on, try this acupressure tool called 'Crooked Pool'. Bend your elbow and look for the end of the crease, just at the verge of the joint. This point clears heat, and can help alleviate hot flushes and night sweats.



# COOLING HERBS

Qualified herbalists are trained to degree level and fall under what's called 'functional medicine'. They are able to diagnose health issues and prescribe much stronger herbs and blends for hot flushes than what is available online or over the counter.

However, it's also important to consult with your clinician to check herbs are a safe option for you (especially if you have thyroid issues or a history of oestrogen-receptor cancer).

Look at the websites for the National Institute of Medical Herbalists (NIMH) or the College of Practitioners of Phytotherapy (CPP) for a qualified herbalist.





# GET MOVING

You might think movement is counterintuitive to reducing hot flashes but getting outside and doing moderate movement for thirty minutes a day has been clinically proven to help alleviate stress and have a positive effect on reducing hot flashes, as well as night sweats.

Here are a few ideas that may work for you:

- ✦ Swimming
- ✦ Cycling
- ✦ Yoga
- ✦ Pilates
- ✦ Strength training



# KEEP YOUR COOL

During perimenopause and beyond, our body reacts more extremely to small fluctuations in temperature, so we can swing from feeling chilly to burning up.

Here are few ideas to help:

- ✦ Set your thermostat to 18°C
- ✦ Have a well-ventilated environment
- ✦ Wear natural, loose-fitting layers
- ✦ Cotton sheets and layered bedding
- ✦ Avoid heat before bed, e.g. drink, bath
- ✦ Invest in a cooling-pad



# SUMMARY

- ✦ Develop an attitude of calm acceptance
- ✦ Use relaxation techniques when a flush arrives
- ✦ See the flushes as a biological, momentary event
- ✦ Make changes to your lifestyle to improve nutrition and sleep, manage weight and reduce stress
- ✦ Look at other options such as functional medicine and creating an optimum environment to stay cool

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