Tips for Managing Fibromyalgia Night Sweats and Hot Flashes

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What Causes Fibromyalgia Night Sweats and Hot Flashes?

Many, if not most, fibromyalgia sufferers are all too familiar with hot flashes, sudden flashes and night sweats — those uncomfortable temperature fluctuations that can hit suddenly and interfere with everything.

Since problems with internal temperature control can worsen other fibro symptoms, it is important to gain control over your body temperature before your level of activity, concentration, and quality of life begins to suffer.

Fibromyalgia and Sensitivity to Heat and Cold

With fibromyalgia, volatile body temperature generally doesn't indicate fever, and hot flashes or chills often hit without any other symptoms.

Some experts suspect the thyroid gland is to blame, since it helps to control body temperature. Many fibromyalgia sufferers also have hypothyroidism, which means the thyroid does not function as well as it is supposed to, which leads to temperature sensitivity.

There is no consensus on what is behind temperature sensitivity in fibromyalgia sufferers, but some suspect low blood volume or poor circulation could be to blame in cases where the thyroid is performing normally.

Severe cold and extreme heat can register as painful experiences in those with a lower pain threshold, which may also explain why temperature sensitivity is so common among those with pain sensitivity.

In fact, up to half of all sufferers complain that they are either always hot or cold, or else deal with random and intense temperature fluctuations.

Coping Strategies for Fibromyalgia Night Sweats and Hot Flashes

Temperature sensitivity can be difficult to predict and to control, but there are a few steps you can take to ease the sudden discomfort and the persistent distraction of fibromyalgia night sweats and hot flashes.

Sudden hot or cold episodes can interrupt your sleep and your daily routine, so try to stay a step ahead with some preventative measures and a good plan of action:

Relax With Autogenic Training (AT)

Specific techniques can help you train your body to respond to your verbal commands, in order to control physiological responses like blood pressure and body temperature.

The technique consists of six standard exercises to promote deep relaxation that you learn over the course of

several weeks or months, and continue to use regularly in times of physical or emotional stress. The effects of AT on body temperature are measurable and undeniable, but only if you stick with it.

Check Your Medication

Some pain medication used for fibromyalgia can also help diminish temperature sensitivity, so speak to your doctor about drugs that work to reduce certain nerve signals.

In some cases, steroid medication can help. If a thyroid condition is at the root of your temperature sensitivity, you may need to take synthetic hormones to restore balance.

But while some treatments for pain can also help reduce your sensitivity to heat and cold, others can make things worse.

Allergy medication, blood pressure drugs, and muscle spasm drugs can prevent sweating so the body cannot cool itself, while migraine drugs and some decongestants decrease blood flow to the skin which also leads to heat build-up.

Be Prepared

It may seem obvious, but having extra layers for warmth and helpful tools to stay cool can save you a lot of discomfort.

Keep a warm blanket and a jacket in your car if you are prone to chills, and you may want to take an ice pack or frozen water bottle from the freezer each morning, so you can calm any hot flashes that hit during the day.

Get in the Tub

The key to regulating your body temperature safely and effectively is to gradually bring it down (or up, if you happen to be feeling cold).

One great way to ease back to a comfortable temperature is with a warm bath — do not make the water too hot or too cold, or it can shock your system and make you feel worse. Aim for room temperature or lukewarm, and try to relax as you soak (or shower) for 10 or 15 minutes.

Sleep in Layers

The only thing worse than waking with a coat of clammy sweat is having to rouse yourself to peel off uncomfortably hot pajamas or heavy blankets.

Prepare for the worst before you hit the hay by making up the bed in a few light layers (with temperature regulating sheets, if possible) and dressing in something soft and airy. The easier you can remove a layer when you get sweaty, the better your chances of getting a decent night’s sleep without too much interruption.

The Bottom Line...

It’s important to consult your doctor about other possible conditions that might be masked by your fibromyalgia, since temperature sensitivity can point to a range of underlying illnesses.

Once your doctor has ensured that there are no other conditions to treat, you can work together to create a plan that involves helpful medication, behavioral therapy, and compensatory strategies to regain control over your physical comfort.