

## Ayurveda for Hot Flashes

### Description:

Hot Flashes or Vasomotor Symptoms are a common complaint of women going through menopause in America; however, surprisingly while this is a common complaint, hot flashes are not a normal part of menopause worldwide. I was surprised to discover the following statistics:

- America 80% (Moderate to severe Hot Flashes)
- Thailand 23%
- Japan 17%
- Traditional Mayans 0% !! (Epple, 2016)

Hot Flashes are so uncommon in Japan, their language has no terminology for the episodes. It is suspected the higher intake of soy in Japanese women's diets might be related to the low occurrence of hot flashes (Kronenburg, 2010).

If a woman is seeking a time-tested natural way to deal with the symptoms of perimenopause and menopause, an ayurvedic approach is an option. Ayurvedic Health Care is a time-tested approach to medicine that has been around for 5,000 years originating in India. The Ayurvedic system believes in a balance of three main body constitutions or Doshas: Vata, Pitta and Kapha. A person has a unique blend of all three Doshas with one or two being more dominant. Briefly the Doshas are described as follows:

- Vata – quick, airy, flighty, changeable, thin.
  - Unbalanced – anxiety, dry skin.
  - Unbalanced during menopause – anxiety, insomnia.
- Pitta – energetic, passionate, muscular.
  - Unbalanced - fiery, hot temperament, angry.
  - Unbalanced during menopause – anger, hot flashes.
- Kapha – earthy, stable, strong.
  - Unbalanced – depressed, sluggish, prone to being overweight.
  - Unbalanced during menopause – weight gain, moodiness.

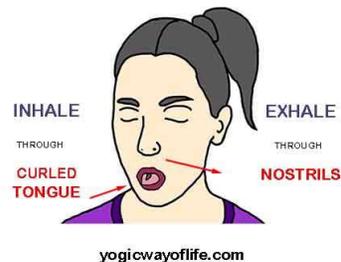
Ayurveda also looks at life's seasons according to the doshas:

- Children - Kapha grounding stage of life.
- Younger adults - Pitta fiery "go-get-em", competitive stage.
- Mature adults and Menopause – Vata phase working smarter not harder, more wisdom, contemplative.

A positive attitude towards this Vata stage of life is also important. Many women find an abundance of energy, wisdom, strength (physically and mentally) and vitality during menopause. Personally, I have found menopause to be an empowering stage in life where I discovered my true Dharma (life work) of being a Yoga Therapist. My favorite, more positive term for hot flashes are “power surges” (which have mostly calmed down with time, yoga and meditation).

**Symptoms:**

- A sudden sense of heat or being overly hot, sometimes feeling faint.
- Perspiration.
- Flushed cheeks and chest.
- Hot flashes can be accompanied by nausea.
- Night sweats – waking up being totally drenched in sweat to the point of having to change pajamas and sheets.
- Increased heart rate.
- Some women experience cold or chills after a hot flash.

Benefits of Yoga	Precautions
<p><b>Meditation</b> helps calm the nervous system, encouraging the parasympathetic nervous system (rest and digest) to kick in.</p>	<p>Common Hot Flash triggers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warm weather</li> <li>• Stress</li> <li>• Spicy foods</li> <li>• Hot food or beverage</li> <li>• Smoking</li> <li>• Obesity</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pranayama</b> (yogic breathing exercises) Nadi Shodhana or Alternate Nostril Breathing calms the nervous system cooling the “pitta fire”. Sheetali breathing is also cooling:</p> <div data-bbox="243 1407 584 1774" style="text-align: center;"> <p><b>SHEETALI PRANAYAMA</b> THE COOLING BREATH</p>  </div>	<p>Approach any new Pranayama slowly, and if you experience any light-headedness, return to slow rhythmic breathing.</p>
<p>Ayurveda practitioners might recommend “Panchakarma” or a “cleanse” to</p>	<p>A “Panchakarma” treatment needs to be administered by a professional therapist</p>

<p>eliminate toxic waste or “Ama” from your body. Cleanses might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Daily warm oil massages</b></li> <li>• A healing Kitchari diet</li> <li>• Yoga practice</li> <li>• Herbal enemas</li> <li>• Skin brushing w/ wool or silk gloves, so the skin will absorb the oil massage</li> <li>• Exfoliation w/ herbal paste</li> </ul>	<p>to monitor the detoxification process. While most of the treatment is pleasant, too much detoxification too soon can be hard on the body causing flu-like symptoms.</p>
<p>Menopause is a time to <b>nourish yourself</b> with a good, organic whole foods plant-based diet.</p>	<p>Not being mindful of eating a healthy, nutritious diet can lead to weight gain, and health risk factors such as diabetes. Avoid highly processed carbs such as white sugar, white bread and sugary drinks which can cause a hormonal imbalance and elevated insulin levels which can lead to insulin resistance. Bad carbs can also trigger early onset menopause, as well as weight gain (Weinberg, 2019).</p>
<p>Menopausal women not only need to nourish themselves with good food, but also <b>slow down and</b> allow time to take care of themselves with enjoyable movement such as yoga, hiking, dancing, biking....PLAYING! When studying Occupational Therapy, <b>PLAY</b> was an essential component of healthy living (NCTC, 2000).</p>	<p>Avoid over booking your schedule with too much work or too many activities. Simplify your life, delegate duties, focus on priorities. Allow time for “breathing room” (literally with pranayama), meditation, journaling, play. In the evenings Yin Yoga and meditation might be helpful to reduce night sweats (Lonsdorf, 2019).</p>

### Mini Flow: Bedtime Yin Flow

- Seated spinal circles – inhaling leaning forward, exhale when circling towards the back....nice slow circles exploring movement with breath.
- Cat/Cow flow with breath – inhale Cow, exhale Cat
- Modified side plank/Gate flow – stretching long in modified side plank, inhale up, exhale Gate, inhale up, exhale modified side plank, flowing slowly with breath.
- Lizard – continuing slow, meditative deep belly breathing or ujayii breath.
- Pigeon or reclining pigeon (figure 4) – with breath.
- Supine Twists
- Legs-Up-the-Wall – meditating w/ breath, perhaps a mantra:
  - (Inhale) “Live carefree before God
  - (Exhale) he is most careful with you. [1 Peter 5:6-7 MSG]

- Savasana – either continuing Legs-Up-the-Wall or Straddle Legs-Up-the-Wall or Corpse Pose (Yogi's choice)

## References:

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