Your Body Won't Cool Down in Summer—Here's Why Transcript

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Why Summer Makes Hot Flashes Worse

I practice in Scottsdale, Arizona. My I practice in Scottsdale, Arizona. My patients navigate 115° patients navigate 115° summers on top of perimenopause every summers on top of perimenopause every year. I have a very specific set of year. I have a very specific set of things that actually work in real things that actually work in real Arizona heat. Let me give them to you.

Arizona heat. Let me give them to you. Hot flashes on top of summer heat is a Hot flashes on top of summer heat is a specific kind of miserable that most specific kind of miserable that most menopause advice doesn't actually menopause advice doesn't actually address. Today, I want to give you the address. Today, I want to give you the physiology of why summer makes hot physiology of why summer makes hot flashes worse, and then a practical flashes worse, and then a practical proactive strategy not stay inside and proactive strategy not stay inside and hope for the best. We're covering why hope for the best. We're covering why the two heat sources compound each the two heat sources compound each other, how to cool down fast when you other, how to cool down fast when you need to, and how to navigate summer need to, and how to navigate summer events without withdrawing from your events without withdrawing from your life.

life. life. Hot flashes aren't just feeling hot. Hot flashes aren't just feeling hot. They happen because your brain's They happen because your brain's internal thermostat, the thermoneutral internal thermostat, the thermoneutral zone, has narrowed due to estrogen zone, has narrowed due to estrogen decline. Before menopause, you had a decline. Before menopause, you had a comfortable temperature range. In comfortable temperature range. In perimenopause, that range shrinks perimenopause, that range shrinks dramatically. In summer, the external dramatically. In summer, the external heat starts pushing you toward the upper heat starts pushing you toward the upper edge of that narrow window before you've edge of that narrow window before you've even had a hot flash. You're beginning even had a hot flash. You're beginning every day already near the trigger every day already near the trigger threshold. This is why a mild hot flash threshold. This is why a mild hot flash in January can become a severe one in in January can become a severe one in July with the exact same hormonal July with the exact same hormonal picture. The environment is adding fuel picture.

Proactive vs Reactive Hot Flash Management

The environment is adding fuel to an already sensitized system. to an already sensitized system. Standard advice says avoid triggers. In Standard advice says avoid triggers. In Scottsdale in July, the trigger is Scottsdale in July, the trigger is stepping outside. So, if you're starting stepping outside. So, if you're starting the day already near the threshold, the the day already near the threshold, the strategy has to change. And the keyword strategy has to change. And the keyword is proactive. Most women manage hot is proactive. Most women manage hot flashes reactively. A hot flash starts, flashes reactively. A hot flash starts, they find somewhere cool, They wait for they find somewhere cool, They wait for it to pass. That works in winter. In it to pass. That works in winter. In summer, reactive management barely keeps summer, reactive management barely keeps up with the volume and intensity. The up with the volume and intensity. The shift that changes everything is shift that changes everything is proactive thermal management. Start proactive thermal management. Start cooling before you feel hot, not during cooling before you feel hot, not during the flash, before the threshold is the flash, before the threshold is reached. This means thinking about your reached. This means thinking about your thermal environment in advance.

thermal environment in advance. What's the plan for the outdoor event? What's the plan for the outdoor event? What time of day? What cooling tools am What time of day? What cooling tools am I bringing? A woman who has cooling I bringing? A woman who has cooling tools in her car keeps her car cold tools in her car keeps her car cold before she gets in and sits in shade before she gets in and sits in shade with a misting fan is not reacting to a with a misting fan is not reacting to a flash. She's keeping her body below the flash. She's keeping her body below the trigger threshold. Pre-cooling matters.

trigger threshold. Pre-cooling matters. Standing in air conditioning for 10 Standing in air conditioning for 10 minutes before going outside actually minutes before going outside actually lowers your core temperature enough to lowers your core temperature enough to give you a buffer window. You're not give you a buffer window.

Where to Cool Your Body for Fastest Relief

You're not waiting for the problem, you're waiting for the problem, you're preventing it. Now, when you do need to preventing it. Now, when you do need to cool down fast, here's the physiology cool down fast, here's the physiology behind where to cool first. Not all behind where to cool first. Not all cooling is equal. Cooling your torso or cooling is equal. Cooling your torso or sitting next to a fan moves air around sitting next to a fan moves air around the outside of your body. Cooling the outside of your body. Cooling specific areas gets cold blood back to specific areas gets cold blood back to your core faster. Wrists, the radial your core faster. Wrists, the radial artery runs close to the surface of the artery runs close to the surface of the inside of the wrist. Hold something cold inside of the wrist. Hold something cold against it like a cold drink, a cold against it like a cold drink, a cold pack, cold water from a bottle, and pack, cold water from a bottle, and you're cooling blood before it you're cooling blood before it recirculates back to your core. Neck, recirculates back to your core. Neck, the carotid artery runs close to the the carotid artery runs close to the surface of the sides on the side of your surface of the sides on the side of your neck, and a cold cloth or a cooling neck, and a cold cloth or a cooling towel on the neck cools blood before towel on the neck cools blood before going directly to your brain, where the going directly to your brain, where the thermostat actually lives. On your face, thermostat actually lives. On your face, the facial blood vessels are the facial blood vessels are superficial, and a cool mist on the face superficial, and a cool mist on the face reduces perceived temperature quickly.

reduces perceived temperature quickly. This is also why a misting fan works This is also why a misting fan works better than a regular fan during a better than a regular fan during a flash. Cooling these three areas flash. Cooling these three areas simultaneously, the wrists, the neck, simultaneously, the wrists, the neck, and the face, can reduce the intensity and the face, can reduce the intensity and duration of a flash faster than and duration of a flash faster than anything else that doesn't involve anything else that doesn't involve medication or botanicals. There's also medication or botanicals. There's also something specific happening with something specific happening with cortisol in summer that amplifies cortisol in summer that amplifies everything, and it's really worth everything, and it's really worth knowing about. If this is giving you knowing about. If this is giving you practical tools you can actually use practical tools you can actually use this summer, subscribe. I practice in this summer, subscribe. I practice in Scottsdale. Hot climate menopause Scottsdale.

The Cortisol and Heat Connection

Hot climate menopause management is something I think about a management is something I think about a lot. Let's keep going. Here's something lot. Let's keep going. Here's something not enough people talk about. Cortisol not enough people talk about. Cortisol and heat activate the same and heat activate the same thermoregulatory pathway. Summer often thermoregulatory pathway. Summer often brings more cortisol, disrupted sleep brings more cortisol, disrupted sleep from heat, more social obligations, from heat, more social obligations, schedule changes, and more cortisol schedule changes, and more cortisol means more hot flashes. Stress and heat means more hot flashes. Stress and heat both narrow the thermoneutral zone both narrow the thermoneutral zone through the HPA axis. In summer, you through the HPA axis. In summer, you often get both at once. This is why a often get both at once. This is why a day that was stressful and hot produces day that was stressful and hot produces more flashes than either one alone. Pace more flashes than either one alone. Pace slow breathing around six breaths per slow breathing around six breaths per minute activates the parasympathetic minute activates the parasympathetic system and partially blunts the cortisol system and partially blunts the cortisol heat signal. This is not just relaxation heat signal. This is not just relaxation advice. It's a physiological advice. It's a physiological intervention. Breathe in for five intervention. Breathe in for five counts, pause at the top, out for five counts, pause at the top, out for five counts, and pause at the bottom. Do this counts, and pause at the bottom. Do this for two to three minutes before a for two to three minutes before a stressful situation, before going stressful situation, before going outside, or when you feel a flash outside, or when you feel a flash building. The sleep piece matters just building.

Sleep Environment and Night Sweats

The sleep piece matters just as much. Hot nights raise cortisol, as much. Hot nights raise cortisol, which worsens both sleep quality and which worsens both sleep quality and flash frequency. The sleep environment flash frequency. The sleep environment is a direct hot flash management tool, a is a direct hot flash management tool, a comfort preference.

comfort preference. Keep your bedroom between 65° and 68°. Keep your bedroom between 65° and 68°. Use moisture-wicking bedding and a Use moisture-wicking bedding and a cooling pillowcase if night sweats are cooling pillowcase if night sweats are part of your picture. That sleep part of your picture. That sleep environment is where the night time environment is where the night time cortisol cycle either starts or it cortisol cycle either starts or it doesn't. Let me put all of this into a doesn't.

A Practical Summer Protocol for Hot Climates

Let me put all of this into a practical summer protocol, the kind I practical summer protocol, the kind I actually give patients. Your body can actually give patients. Your body can handle summer. It just needs more handle summer. It just needs more support right now than it did before support right now than it did before perimenopause.

perimenopause. perimenopause. Here's the framework at home. Keep the Here's the framework at home. Keep the thermostat lower than feels necessary. thermostat lower than feels necessary.

For perimenopause in Arizona, the house For perimenopause in Arizona, the house temperature is a direct health variable, temperature is a direct health variable, not a utility cost debate. Your not a utility cost debate. Your thermostat is managing your nervous thermostat is managing your nervous system right now. Your sleep system right now. Your sleep environment. 65° to 68°.

environment. 65° to 68°. Moisture-wicking bedding, cooling Moisture-wicking bedding, cooling pillowcase if night sweats are a pillowcase if night sweats are a problem. This is where you either start problem. This is where you either start the next day ahead or behind. In the the next day ahead or behind. In the car. Pre-cool before you get in. Blast car. Pre-cool before you get in. Blast the AC for 2 to 3 minutes before you sit the AC for 2 to 3 minutes before you sit down. Keep a misting spray bottle and a down. Keep a misting spray bottle and a cooling towel in the car, every car, cooling towel in the car, every car, always. These are the two things I tell always. These are the two things I tell every patient in a hot climate to have every patient in a hot climate to have this summer. And for outdoor events, this summer. And for outdoor events, scout shaded areas before you arrive.

scout shaded areas before you arrive. Get there early and pre-cool. Bring your Get there early and pre-cool. Bring your misting spray, a cooling towel, water misting spray, a cooling towel, water with electrolytes, because dehydration with electrolytes, because dehydration worsens flash intensity, and a small worsens flash intensity, and a small battery fan. This isn't excessive, it's battery fan. This isn't excessive, it's a strategy. Clothing, keep it a strategy. Clothing, keep it lightweight and moisture-wicking fabrics lightweight and moisture-wicking fabrics in light colors. Layer a thin camisole in light colors. Layer a thin camisole under a button-down shirt you can under a button-down shirt you can remove. The best fabric is one that remove. The best fabric is one that doesn't trap heat when it's damp.

doesn't trap heat when it's damp. Trigger reduction matters more in Trigger reduction matters more in summer. Alcohol, spicy food, and summer. Alcohol, spicy food, and caffeine trigger hot flashes year-round.

caffeine trigger hot flashes year-round. In summer, when you're already starting In summer, when you're already starting near the threshold, those same triggers near the threshold, those same triggers hit harder. Pre-event choices, like what hit harder. Pre-event choices, like what you eat before going out, whether you you eat before going out, whether you have the glass of wine, matter more in have the glass of wine, matter more in July than they do in December. Hot July than they do in December. Hot flashes in summer are harder for a flashes in summer are harder for a physiological reason. The external heat physiological reason. The external heat pushes you to the edge of your already pushes you to the edge of your already narrowed thermoregulatory window before narrowed

thermoregulatory window before a flash even starts. The shift from a flash even starts. The shift from reactive to proactive management changes reactive to proactive management changes everything. Cooling before the everything. Cooling before the threshold, rather than during a flash, threshold, rather than during a flash, targeting wrists and neck to cool blood targeting wrists and neck to cool blood efficiently, and managing cortisol efficiently, and managing cortisol through sleep and breathing. Your body through sleep and breathing. Your body knows how to regulate temperature. The knows how to regulate temperature. The perimenopause transition just made the perimenopause transition just made the margin smaller. The right environment margin smaller. The right environment and the right tools give you that margin and the right tools give you that margin back. If you want to go deeper on what's back. If you want to go deeper on what's actually causing hot flashes and the actually causing hot flashes and the natural interventions with real clinical natural interventions with real clinical evidence, I covered that in a separate evidence, I covered that in a separate video. I'll link it here. This one was video. I'll link it here. This one was the summer practical. That one is the the summer practical. That one is the root cause treatment. Drop a comment root cause treatment. Drop a comment with your location and your biggest hot with your location and your biggest hot flash challenge in the heat. I'm flash challenge in the heat. I'm especially curious about people in hot especially curious about people in hot climates. I'll try to answer as many as climates. I'll try to answer as many as I Root cause medicine for perimenopause I Root cause medicine for perimenopause in plain language every week. If in plain language every week. If that's what you need, subscribe. You're in the what you need, subscribe. You're in the