

Menopausal hot flashes may be a good sign for heart

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You are enjoying a night out with friends when it starts; first you feel flush, then a sensation of warmth crawls down your body. Soon you begin perspiring and you feel as if everyone around you can tell what is happening – another hot flash. An estimated three out of four women experience hot flashes associated with menopause and nearly all would agree they are a nuisance, but experts say there could be an upside to having hot flashes. New research released today in the online edition of the journal *Menopause* suggests that women who suffer from hot flashes and night sweats may be at lower risk for cardiovascular disease, stroke and death.

"While they are certainly bothersome, [hot flashes](#) may not be all bad," said Northwestern Medicine endocrinologist Emily Szmulowicz, MD, who is lead author of the study. "Our research found that despite previous reports suggesting that [menopause](#) symptoms were associated with increased levels of risk markers for heart disease, such as blood pressure and cholesterol, the actual outcomes tell a different story."

Szmulowicz, who co-chaired the study along with JoAnn Manson, MD, DrPH, and Ellen Seely, MD from Harvard Medical School, reviewed medical information from 60,000 women who were enrolled in the Women's Health Initiative Observational Study and followed for ten years, to determine the relationship between menopause symptoms and cardiovascular events. Subjects were grouped into four categories – women who experienced hot flashes and night sweats at the onset of menopause, later in menopause, during both time periods, and not at all.

"We found that women who experienced symptoms when they began menopause had fewer cardiovascular events than those who experienced hot flashes late in menopause or not at all," said Szmulowicz.

The results are significant since there has been concern that menopausal symptoms, which result from instability in the blood vessels in the skin, may put women at risk for other types of vascular problems as well.

"It is reassuring that these symptoms, which are experienced by so many women, do not seem to correlate with increased risk of cardiovascular disease," said Szmulowicz.

Szmulowicz and team say more research needs to be done in order to understand the mechanisms behind the association, but say it's good news for the millions of [women](#) who experience these troublesome symptoms at the time of menopause.

"Hot flashes will never be enjoyable, but perhaps these findings will make them more tolerable," said Szmulowicz.

More information: The paper titled "Vasomotor symptoms and cardiovascular events in postmenopausal women" is now available online and will be printed in the June issue of *Menopause*.

[journals.lww.com/menopausejour ... l/pages/default.aspx](http://journals.lww.com/menopausejour...l/pages/default.aspx)

Provided by Northwestern Memorial Hospital

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