# Episode 4 – Sweat the night away

**Announcer:** This conversation has been made possible by the New South Wales Government's Menopause Awareness Campaign.

**Sarah White:** Hello and welcome. I'm your host Sarah White from Jean Hailes for Women's Health. When people think of menopause, they think of hot flushes, but there are so many other symptoms. In this series, we hear from you the things that are bothering you, the things that are confusing, and things you didn't know were symptoms at all.

Join us as we work through the Menopause Symptom Checklist.

I'm joined today by GP Dr. Sara Whitburn, and we're gonna start with a question that'll make us all sweat.

**Listener Question 1:** Hello, my name is Julie. I was giving a presentation at work the other day, and my face turned bright red. I could feel the sweat pouring down my back. Is this what a hot flush feels like and how do I get it under control?

**Sarah White:** I'm sort of, this is rueful laughter of mine because I do a lot of presentations and I've certainly been in this situation. So it's definitely a hot flush, right?

**Dr. Sara Whitburn:** It is a hot flush, that feeling of warmth or your face going red. You can also become very sweaty. And some people even say to me that they get so sweaty they need to change their clothes after they've had a hot flush.

Having it happen during presenting is so common. I don't know if you've seen the clip of Drew Barrymore, who a lot of people know as an actor, she has a talk show as well, and in the middle of interviewing had a hot flush and told everyone she was having a hot flush.

**Sarah White:** Oh, but I love that. So if she's acknowledging it and presumably laughing it off, that, that's terrific. I mean, we really need to be able to get to that point as a society, don't we?

**Dr. Sara Whitburn:** I think we do. And she started doing one of the tips that I normally tell people because I present a lot too, and when you're thinking about making yourself comfortable being prepared for a hot flush, she started to take off her top layers of her clothes. And so one of the things I often say is try and have multiple layers of thin, breathable fabric.

**Sarah White:** Your cotton, your wool, your bamboo, right?

**Dr. Sara Whitburn:** Absolutely. Yep. Getting control of the thermostat if you can. So, I hear people talk about feeling hot when they're presenting all the time. Get the air conditioning control, get the room down to where you like it before you start if you can.

Having a handheld fan can be really useful and avoiding things that might make you feel really hot beforehand. So, spicy foods or alcohol.

**Sarah White:** Is there anything else that we can do, rather than grabbing hold of the air conditioning controller, is there anything else we might be able to do to help manage it?

**Dr. Sara Whitburn:** Yes. As much as I'm sort of giving small tricks and tips that you could do just then, in that presentation, for some people, hot flashes, are so severe that it's just interfering with their day-to-day life. And if that's the case, then come and see a health professional and talk about some of the treatment options that are available because they can help decrease the amount or the severity of hot flushes.

**Listener Question 2:** Why am I getting so hot at night I can't sleep?

**Sarah White:** Why would you be getting so hot at night you can't sleep? Which has all sorts of knock on effects.

**Dr. Sara Whitburn:** It sounds to me like this person's having hot flushes at night, which is really common. People can have them just at night or just at day, or they can have a mixture and it can change over the duration of their menopausal symptom.

**Sarah White:** So as a GP, you have a patient come to see you and talk about these hot flushes at night. What would you normally tell that person?

**Dr. Sara Whitburn:** So I'd go through some of the tips, lifestyle changes around hot flushes. And so I would talk a little bit about trying to stay cool, trying not to have heavy doonas, trying to use lighter sheets if you need to. You may need to not share your doona with your partner anymore, so it might be time to have two separate doonas.

**Sarah White:** Oh, so not stealing it, but actually have a light one for you and a heavy one for your partner who's not going through menopause.

**Dr. Sara Whitburn:** That's right. Push the heavy one over to the other person. But also making sure that, you know, you're in layers. So, if you're wearing pyjamas that they are in cotton or breathable fabrics, maybe having layers so you can take things off if you need to.

The important thing is also thinking about what you're doing before you go to bed as well. So trying not to have spicy food or a large meal. Trying to cut down your alcohol, not smoke or give up smoking if you can. So all those things that can make you hotter at night, trying to, have those healthy lifestyle changes.

**Sarah White:** And if it's really bad, Dr. Sara, if you are really struggling, you are waking up in the middle of the night, you're having to change the sheets, sometimes multiple times we've heard from women telling us that. What do you do then?

**Dr. Sara Whitburn:** Then I think it's time to come in and talk about treatments because it's not only just the hot flush making you feel really uncomfortable and unpleasant, but your sleep's disturbed and with your sleep being impacted, that can impact on your mood, it can impact on how you feel physically. So coming in and talking to us about treatment options that might decrease the amount or the severity of those hot flushes at night can help, and can help all those knock-on changes as well.

**Sarah White:** That's it from us today. We know menopause can be tough, but it's worse when you don't talk about it. To support conversations with your doctor, your colleagues, your family and friends, you can download the Menopause Symptoms Checklist on the Jean Hailes for Women's Health website, and the New South Wales Menopause Toolkit.

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Information about the podcast

This podcast series has been made possible by the NSW Government's Menopause Awareness Campaign. For help talking about menopause, download the [Perimenopause and Menopause Symptom Checklist](https://www.jeanhailes.org.au/resources/perimenopause-and-menopause-symptom-checklist) and take it with you to your next medical appointment. For more information visit: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/women-nsw/toolkits-and-resources/perimenopause-and-menopause-toolkit>

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Information about Jean Hailes for Women’s Health

Jean Hailes for Women's Health is a national not-for-profit organisation dedicated to improving the health of all women, girls and gender-diverse people. For free, evidence-based and easy-to-understand health information, visit [www.jeanhailes.org.au](http://www.jeanhailes.org.au).

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