

Definitive cure for hot flashes remains elusive

By Kim Painter, USA Today

When Kathryn DiPasqua, 51, started having bothersome menopausal hot flashes, she had a chat with her gynecologist: "I told her 'I do not want to go on hormone replacement therapy. I'm a healthy person. I don't want to put anything unnecessary inside my body.'"

So DiPasqua, like many women, tried other things, for four years: "I tried black cohosh, I tried soybeans; I would eat edamame by the handful," says the Richmond, Va., college marketing specialist. She limited caffeine and alcohol and jogged daily.

The result: She kept on overheating, about a dozen times a day and two or three times a night. She says her makeup melted, her clothes were ruined, her sheets soaked – and she got just plain tired.

A few months ago, she went back to her doctor and got a prescription for a hormone patch. She doesn't love it, she says, but it works.

DiPasqua's experiences are right in line with the latest research: Despite high hopes and years of study, most alternative treatments for hot flashes just don't work. Hormones do, but many women still see them as a last resort. A few other prescription drugs show mild promise.

So the great, universally accepted hot flash cure remains elusive.

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