

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 12:01 A.M.
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2021**

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A Sedentary Lifestyle Can Lead to More Nighttime Hot Flashes

New study suggests that too many hours sitting on the couch could increase problematic hot flashes in midlife women

CLEVELAND, Ohio (September 22, 2021)—Hot flashes, one of the most common symptoms of the menopause transition, not only interfere with a woman’s quality of life, but are also associated with an array of health problems. A new study suggests that sedentary behavior can increase the likelihood of nighttime hot flashes. Study results will be presented during The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) Annual Meeting in Washington, DC, September 22-25, 2021.

Approximately 80% of women report experiencing hot flashes. Some data suggest that a greater number and severity of hot flashes are related to increased risk for cardiovascular disease. Sedentary behavior, which is often more prevalent as women age, is also related to a greater risk for heart disease. Few studies, however, have evaluated the effect of sedentary behavior on hot flash experience. Those studies that have been conducted were largely based on self-reports and did not consider objective measures of hot flashes or sedentary behavior.

This new study, which includes pre-, peri-, and postmenopausal women, aimed to determine whether objectively measured sedentary behavior is a predictor of objective and subjective hot flash experience. Preliminary results of the study indicate that sedentary behavior does, in fact, predict nighttime objective hot flashes, independently of time spent participating in moderate-to-vigorous activity.

“Since women near the menopause transition spend a large portion of their daily activities in sedentary behaviors, it’s important to understand how such behavior influences menopausal hot flashes,” says Dr. Sarah Witkowski, an exercise physiologist at Smith College and co-author of the study. “Knowledge regarding the influence of sedentary behavior on hot flashes can improve evidence-based lifestyle recommendations for women experiencing hot flashes.”

“With such a large portion of women affected by hot flashes, research that helps identify triggers or risk factors is always valuable,” says Dr. Stephanie Faubion, NAMS medical director. “Healthcare professionals should review a patient’s physical activities and routines when discussing treatment options.”

Drs. Witkowski and Faubion are available for interviews before and after the presentation at the Annual Meeting.

For more information about midlife women's health issues, menopause and healthy aging, visit menopause.org.

Founded in 1989, The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) is North America's leading nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the health and quality of life of all women during midlife and beyond through an understanding of menopause and healthy aging. Its multidisciplinary membership of 2,000 leaders in the field—including clinical and basic science experts from medicine, nursing, sociology, psychology, nutrition, anthropology, epidemiology, pharmacy, and education—makes NAMS uniquely qualified to serve as the definitive resource for health professionals and the public for accurate, unbiased information about menopause and healthy aging. To learn more about NAMS, visit www.menopause.org.