



Beat the heat

Many people with M.E. tell us that hot weather can make sleeping at night difficult. With summer just around the corner, StillAllMe.com offers some top tips for how to sleep better during a heatwave.

For me personally, as a man living with M.E., a prolonged period of high summer temperatures and humidity significantly affects me. Hot weather makes coping with an already disabling illness even more challenging. But there are some small changes and tips that can help you stay cooler and sleep better during a heatwave.

1. Put your sheet in the fridge in a plastic cover.

Yes, it's an effort to spend time bagging up a sheet and bundling it into the fridge or freezer, and no, the sheet won't stay cold forever, but for that five minutes of being able to snuggle without getting any hotter? Totally worth it.

2. Fill a hot water bottle with ice water and place on the 'cooling points' of your body.

The best places are behind your knees or ankles, your wrists, neck, groin and elbows. Also, if you share a bed with someone, really fun to apply it to them when they're not expecting it.

3. Cover yourself in aloe vera.

Aloe Vera is famously cooling, even more so if you keep a bottle in the fridge. Slather yourself before bed to feel refreshed and wake up with super soft skin. Any lotion will work if you don't have aloe.

4. Fill a spritzer bottle with chilled water and keep it by your bedside, spray yourself.

I mean, this isn't rocket science but it's a good quick fix.

5. Use cotton pyjamas and thin pure cotton sheets for your bed.

Being naked might actually be less comfortable, because it means there's nothing to absorb your sweat. (Lovely).

6. Eat small light meals often.

The experts from Warren Evans explained that you should avoid eating too much protein as this is a known food group to boost your metabolic rate, and heats your body up.

How to stay cool in the daytime

Staying cool during the day can be just as challenging, with many people with M.E. reporting that the high daytime temperatures can sap their already limited energy and worsen their symptoms. Here are some top tips, from people with M.E., to help you stay cool.

'Jay' McCarthy I leave my bath full of cold water to paddle in all day and have a lot of cold showers and about 12 ice packs in circulation just to stop me passing out.

Leila Shaw I throw some orange segments or grapes in the freezer for an hour or two and find a fruity snack that helps me stay cool and hydrated.

Collette Mccourt Have a supply of food and cold drinks beside you. Use a fan. Take tablets for the pain. Move as little as possible. But also look and listen to life and nature outside your window.

Salome Mutter Pop your feet in a bowl/bucket of water if you can.

Leanne Seddon I use two hot water bottles that have been in the fridge and are lovely and cold.

Catherine Moore For the body losing essential salts and minerals I am increasing salt intake, and rehydration drinks and am using a magnesium spray on my cramping muscles.

Rachel Dean Keep your windows and doors shut to keep the cool in.

Sheila Mitchell Fans on, fluids every two hours also with sips in between.

Sandra Fardon Fox I nap on the floor downstairs where it's slightly less boiling. My two kittens are doing the same.

Marie Redwood I have a cool gel mattress cover and pillowcase version.

Lisa Wilkinson We bought an air conditioner, honestly the best thing we've ever bought.

7. Spicy food.

Sounds counterintuitive, right? But apparently not. Capsaicin, the chemical found in spicy food stimulates heat receptors in your mouth, enhancing circulation and causing sweating, which cools the body down. That said, you're going to want to eat anything spicy a few hours before bed to avoid heartburn.

8. Keep your evening bath or shower tepid.

It can be tempting to get into an ice bath, but a tepid bath or shower is actually better, because it makes it easier for your body to reach the optimal sleep temperature.

9. Turn off all electrical devices in the room.

Every little helps when you're attempting to turn your bedroom into an ice palace. Laptops, computers, TVs, they all produce heat, as do lightbulbs. Keep everything off, if you can.

10. Chilly tootsies.

Your feet and toes have a lot of blood vessels and can help cool your entire body down. You can put a hot water bottle in the freezer to create an ice pack for your feet, or if you're really desperate, plunge your feet into a bucket of cold water before bed. If you're looking for something a bit less extreme, try dangling your feet and toes outside of the covers.

11. Get fan smart.

Yes, a fan is great and will cool you down, but you can super charge your fan's capabilities. Try putting a damp sheet between the fan and your bed, or position a roasting pan full of ice in front of the fan to cool the air. Always try to keep your bedroom door open too as it allows the air to circulate.

12. Try sleeping downstairs.

Heat rises and the lower rooms in your home will be cooler. So if you've got a downstairs (oo, fancy) try sleeping there.

13. Sleep in separate beds.

If you're a bed sharer, you might want to consider taking a little snuggle hiatus while it's extremely hot. Having separate beds will mean you can stretch out and prevent your combined body temperature overheating you.

14. Sleep on a damp sheet or damp towel.

It's known as the Egyptian method. Honestly we're not totally convinced about this one, which could just end up being warm and damp. If you're going to try it, make sure you protect your mattress with a dry towel underneath.

This is an abridged version of a blog post by Action for M.E. Member, Glen Buchanan, who runs the blog StillAllMe.com. You can read the full version and get even more tips for staying cool in a heatwave at StillAllMe.com/heat

