



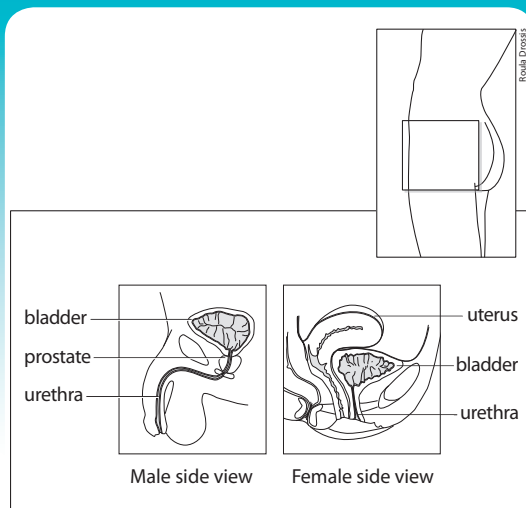
Overactive bladder

Overactive bladder (OAB) is a common condition. With this problem you will find that you need to urinate often or have a strong urge to urinate “at once.” It happens in men, women and children.

What does the bladder do?

- The bladder usually stores urine until you feel the need to empty it (called urinate or void). See diagram *The male and female lower urinary tract*.
- Messages from nerves in the brain and spinal cord let you know when to empty your bladder.
- Most adults urinate (or void) up to 7 times in 24 hours and up to twice at night.
- Children who are toilet-trained usually go to the bathroom 4-8 times a day.
- How often you need to urinate depends on how much you drink.

The male and female lower urinary tract



What happens if I have an overactive bladder (OAB)?

- An **overactive bladder (OAB)** does not store urine as well as a healthy bladder.
- The overactive bladder works “overtime” so that:
 - You urinate more often during the day
 - You must get up during the night to urinate (called **nocturia**)
 - You feel an “instant” need to urinate that is hard to hold back (called **urgency**)
 - You sometimes leak urine when you have this strong, sudden need to urinate (called **urge incontinence**).
- Your symptoms will not always be the same.
- Leaking urine with OAB is not the same as leaking urine when you exercise, cough, sneeze, or laugh (called **stress urinary incontinence**).
- It is possible to have more than one type of urine that leaks (called **mixed incontinence**).

What causes OAB?

- Usually, the cause of overactive bladder symptoms is unknown.
- Sometimes OAB is related to other conditions like:
 - Infections in your urinary tract (called **UTIs**) (made up of kidneys, ureters, bladder, and urethra) See diagram *The male and female lower urinary tract*.
 - An enlarged prostate (a prostate that has grown bigger)
 - Diseases of the brain and spinal cord (such as multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, spinal cord injury, or stroke)

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- Your urologist will ask you questions and do exams to keep an eye on your symptoms.

- Strengthen your pelvic floor muscles with exercises such as:
 - Squeezing your pelvic floor muscles as if you were trying to avoid “passing wind” from your bowel.

How is OAB diagnosed?

- To diagnose OAB symptoms, your doctor will ask about your voiding (urinating) pattern:
 - When: what time of day?
 - How often: how many times per day and night?
 - Any discomfort: when you go to the bathroom or if urine leaks out?
- You may be asked to keep a **voiding diary** (a bladder diary) for more information on your symptoms.

Tests

- You may have to give a urine sample to rule out an infection or bladder diseases (**urinalysis**).
- You may have other, more advanced tests to see how well your bladder is working, such as:
 - A **cystoscopy** - To look inside your bladder using a tiny camera.
 - **Urodynamic assessment** - To measure the pressure inside your bladder when it is full and when it is empty.

How is OAB treated?

Lifestyle changes and therapy without medicine

- You may need to eat less food and have fewer drinks that may bother your bladder such as:
 - Fluids and foods with caffeine - coffee, tea, some sodas, and dark chocolate (not white)
 - Alcohol
 - Some citrus fruits (oranges, lemons, grapefruit)
 - Some spicy and tomato-based foods
- It is often helpful if your bowel movements are regular.
- Also, go to the bathroom regularly, about every 3 to 4 hours.
- **Bladder training:** may improve some of your bladder symptoms (such as **urgency**) by helping you to:
 - Resist sudden urges
 - Try waiting a little longer before you urinate

Treatment with medicine

- There is medicine (in pill form or skin patch) to help you control the symptoms of an overactive bladder.
- Usually, these medications work by:
 - Stopping messages from your nerves getting through to your bladder muscle
 - Stopping your bladder from squeezing when it isn't full
 - Letting your bladder hold more urine
- Medication can help to reduce on:
 - How often you urinate
 - Strong urges to urinate.
- It is important to know that these medications can also have side effects.
 - Dry mouth is most common.
 - You may have headaches, dry eyes, constipation, or abdominal pain.
- You may need to take the medication for a long time.

Other treatments

- When medicine does not work for your symptoms, there are other treatments.
- **Botulinum toxin A** (such as **Botox™**) injections:
 - Can work for several months to relax your bladder muscle
 - Can help with your bladder symptoms
 - Can be given in a clinic using a local anesthetic (you are not put to sleep)
 - May need to be repeated.
- **Neuromodulation:** surgery can place a device (like a pacemaker used for the heart) that will:
 - Act right on the nerves of the bladder.
 - Send mild electrical signals to control both the nerves of the bladder and OAB symptoms.

Bottom line

- Overactive bladder is a common problem that can affect your quality of life.
- Luckily, lifestyle changes, therapy, certain medications, and other treatments can help to relax the bladder and improve the symptoms.

Notes / Diagrams:

This publication is produced by

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