

Overactive Bladder Syndrome

Overactive Bladder Syndrome describes a set of bladder symptoms that may include:

- Strong urgency:** Having to rush to the toilet
- Frequency:** Passing urine more than 8 times in 24 hours.
- Nocturia:** Getting up more than twice in the night
- Urinary leakage:** With a strong feeling of urgency

These symptoms are common and affect almost a quarter of all people over 40 years old. The cause is often unknown.

Possible Treatments

Changes to Fluid Intake

Concentrated urine can irritate the bladder giving the feeling of wanting to rush to the toilet. Make sure you drink enough to keep your urine dilute a good target to aim for would be 8-10 cups/glasses a day.

Caffeine may irritate the bladder. Try reducing your intake of drinks containing caffeine such as tea, coffee, chocolate and some carbonated drinks - this may reduce your feelings of urgency. Always reduce your caffeine intake gradually to avoid side effects.

Bladder Retraining

The principles of bladder retraining are based on holding back your urge to pass urine and increasing the time between visits to the toilet. When you get the feeling of urgency, follow this routine:

1. Stop what you are doing
1. Sit down. If this isn't possible, apply pressure to the backs of your legs by leaning against a desk or piece of furniture. This will help reduce the feeling of urgency.
2. Contract your pelvic muscles which will help you keep your bladder control and reduce your feelings of urgency.
3. Concentrate on anything other than the need to pass urine!
4. Wait for your feeling of urgency to lessen then walk slowly to the toilet if you still need to.

Other ways you can suppress feelings of urgency

The following have all been suggested as helpful in reducing feelings of urgency, and are worth a try:

- Stop still and cross your legs
- Press on your lower pubic area
- Curl up your toes
- Stay calm with relaxed breathing
- Stand on the balls of your feet
- Kneel down & press your heel into the area between your legs
- Sit down & press your spine against the back of the chair

To help your bladder store a normal volume of urine it is also good practice to avoid going to the toilet 'just in case'. It is better to wait until you get the signal your bladder is full.

Medication

Using drugs (anticholinergics) together with these practical measures may be needed. These work by blocking the chemical transmission between nerve endings resulting in a calmer bladder. You can discuss specific drug issues with your nurse, doctor or pharmacist.