Hypnosis for OAB: Is It an Effective Treatment Option?

by ERIC PATTERSON

Hypnotherapy for Overactive Bladder

Having a chronic medical condition means you must endure appointments that seem endless and unhelpful. You try new techniques and treatments that promise results that never match your high expectations. It feels like you are a painful carousel as it spins around, never letting you get off. Overactive bladder (OAB) is a great example of this tiring, endless cycle. It started with the symptoms occasionally popping up, but before long the sporadic problems turned into frequent problems. You may be looking for the best treatment, but you can never find a solution that is right for you. Hypnotherapy for overactive bladder may be able to help your symptoms.

Studying Hypnotherapy

Research shows the effects of hypnosis as a possible treatment for OAB. Hypnosis is a good option as an alternative or complementary treatment for a number of physical health and mental health conditions. Hypnosis can be a great option because:

- It has few, if any, side effects.
- It is readily available in many areas.
- Treatments are non-invasive.
- Symptom management can begin quickly.

The authors of the study were able to make several conclusions regarding the use of hypnosis for OAB after their study. Hypnosis:

- Decreased the participants' number of urinations during the day.
- Lowered their stress levels.
- Improved their overall quality of life.

These findings are encouraging and hopeful for people struggling to find lasting solutions to a long-term problem.

Keeping a Critical Eye

People who desperately seek a resolution to their OAB risk putting too much hope into a treatment before it has been proven effective. Take the study above for example.

If you were watching a news report that said, "Hypnotherapy for overactive bladder yields fantastic results," you would take the story as a legitimate piece of news.

After the broadcast ended, you would be searching online for every hypnotherapist available in your area because this is a proven treatment. You might go so far as to give up your other forms of treatment to focus on hypnosis.

This is where the critical eye comes into play. When you acquire new information about a treatment, you must look into all of the information and ask skeptical questions to really learn the truth. Ask:

- When was this study done?
- What was the goal of this study?
- How many people participated?
- Were participants told the goal of the study?
- Have these results been duplicated?

Ask many questions before accepting new information as proven.

In the case of the study listed above, the total participants were only 20 — all women with OAB. Also, 10 people received behavioral therapy and the other 10 received behavioral therapy and hypnotherapy.

The 10 people who received the combination treatment had better results than the people who only received behavioral therapy, but the important thing to remember is that all participants improved with treatment, no matter what group they were in.

The idea of sensationalizing and reporting on the latest studies is nothing new, but it can be quite problematic.

Watching the news one night, you can hear reports about coffee being terrible for you, and you should avoid it at all costs. The next month, you hear a report stating all of the wonderful benefits coffee offers. Similar reports are filed about eggs, oils, fats, salt and sugar.

The mentioned study is interesting, but what does it really prove? It proves that 10 women with OAB who received hypnosis and behavioral therapy made improvements that were equal to or slightly better than 10 women who received behavioral therapy only.

As a person with OAB, it is crucial that you do not expand or generalize the information any further than this. Even the author of this study admits that larger research on the issue should be completed.

Other OAB Options

Could hypnosis be a helpful treatment for OAB? Certainly, but to this point, the National Institute of Health does not list hypnosis as a proven treatment for OAB. The organization does, however, recommend hypnosis for irritable bowel syndrome, chronic pain and hot flashes.

More than anything, the above study seems to illustrate the benefits of behavioral therapy in the treatment of OAB. After all, both groups received behavioral therapy, and both groups profited.

People looking to expand their treatments for OAB would benefit from seeking mental health treatment that can aid in:

- Improving your behavioral changes related to OAB, like managing your fluid intake and scheduled bathroom usage.
- Tracking foods and drinks that adversely impact your symptoms.
- Helping you through the grief and loss process that is commonly experienced by people with a chronic medical condition.
- Planning and preparing for situations that are potentially embarrassing related to moments of urges or incontinence.
- Accepting the changes in life that come from OAB.
- Improving communication skills to express your thoughts, feelings, hopes and fears to important people in your life.

Beyond the other benefits of therapy for OAB, there is relaxation. Relaxation techniques come in many varieties,

ranging from a simplistic and straightforward tool like deep breathing to a complex and multifaceted technique like guided imagery.

Two relaxation techniques, progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) and autogenics, could be particularly helpful for OAB.

PMR works to systematically tense and release muscles throughout the body to note the difference between tension and relaxation. This can be incorporated into pelvic floor exercises that help strengthen muscles involved in OAB.

Autogenic training works to retrain your thoughts towards more positive and optimistic thinking patterns. By repeating a series of phrases, you can use your thoughts to change your body. Some refer to autogenic training as a form of self-hypnosis.

The Bottom Line

It appears that hypnosis can be helpful as a form of treatment for OAB. But before you go abandoning your other interventions and canceling your next doctor’s appointment, take the time to understand the limited information available.

Rather than jumping on the latest bandwagon, take thoughtful and practical steps to seek out the most advantageous OAB treatments, while trusting the recommendations of your treatment professionals. When you do, you will be rewarded with the best chance to effectively manage your symptoms.