5 Helpful Over-the-Counter Remedies for Overactive Bladder

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Over-the-Counter Medicine for Overactive Bladder

The Urology Care Foundation notes that upwards of 30% of men and 40% of women suffer from overactive bladder (OAB). Unfortunately, many people do not seek assistance with their symptoms due to embarrassment, or perhaps they do not perceive their symptoms as being severe enough to require medical attention. However, relief can be found through over-the-counter medicine for overactive bladder. You should know that OAB is not a symptom of growing older, and it is not limited to gender.

Over-the-Counter Remedies for OAB

There are some treatments that can help. Here is a list of over-the-counter medicine for overactive bladder that is available.

1. Oxybutynin

Oxybutynin, when purchased over the counter, is available as a transdermal patch. This patch delivers 3.9 milligrams of the medication through the skin and can be applied to the abdomen, hip, or buttocks.

The caveat? It can only be used for women. Men with OAB must receive a prescription for a transdermal patch or an oral oxybutynin prescription.

To use the patch, it should be applied to the areas as previously discussed. It is changed after four days, then applied to a different location.

So, how does oxybutynin work to relieve OAB symptoms? Well, oxybutynin is an anticholinergic medication, meaning it blocks acetylcholine. Acetylcholine controls smooth muscle contractions, and the bladder is comprised of smooth muscles. According to Healthline, "oxybutynin acts on acetylcholine receptor cells in the detrusor muscle, the large bladder muscle that squeezes out urine. Reducing the number of detrusor spasms allows the bladder to fill with urine before triggering the sensation of having to go."

Side effects of transdermal oxybutynin may be minimal compared to oral oxybutynin, but may include:

- Dry mouth.
- Dry eyes.
- Constipation.
- Sleepiness.

2. Bladderwrack

Bladderwrack is a form of seaweed; it is often used to treat thyroid problems, specifically hypothyroidism.

However, many people use it to treat OAB. There isn't enough sufficient evidence to state that bladderwrack is an effective treatment for OAB.

Bladderwrack is potent in iodine, which is why it may be an effective treatment for hypothyroidism. As such, bladderwrack is not recommended for those who already take treatment for hypothyroidism and who have hyperthyroidism. It is also not encouraged for those who are pregnant and breastfeeding.

3. Gosha-jinki-gan

There's scientific evidence that a Chinese herb, Gosha-jinki-gan, may be effective in treating OAB. One study took a look at the effect of herb usage over a span of six weeks, and they analyzed peoples' bladder activity while doing so. In turn, it showed improvements in OAB symptoms.

Researchers believe that Gosha-jinki-gan may be an effective treatment for men with benign prostatic obstruction.

4. Horsetail

Horsetail treats a variety of urinary woes, such as urinary incontinence, urinary tract infections, and bladder stones. Though research does not indicate that it is effective specifically for OAB, it is effective for general treatment of the bladder is promising. Only the above-ground portion of the horsetail is safe for human use.

5. Saw Palmetto

Saw palmetto, a beautiful tree common in eastern parts of the U.S., may treat symptoms of OAB.

The berries of the saw palmetto tree are the portion of the tree that is likely effective. According to the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH), it has been used as a traditional treatment for men with OAB who also have prostate problems. However, research is lacking – the NCCIH also conducted a study and found that saw palmetto did not reduce urinary symptoms any more than a placebo.

Each supplement may have their own set of side effects, but common symptoms associated with these supplements include:

- Upset stomach.
- Sleeping issues.
- Blood clotting problems.

These problems can be intensified when taking more than one supplement at the same time. Also, horsetail also has a diuretic effect. Though it may be beneficial for bladder health, it may also increase bathroom trips.

Unless noted by your healthcare provider, herbs should not be taken while pregnant or breastfeeding.

Are Herbs and Supplements Safe?

This is the classic "yes and no" answer.

Most herbs and supplements are natural. However, they can be just as potent as prescription medication. As such, they can be fraught with side effects and can interact with other medications, such as prescription medications that are prescribed for OAB.

Also, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not approve herbs as effective treatment methods. As such, they do not regulate them.

The Bottom Line

Treatment of OAB should be discussed extensively with a healthcare provider. Typically, symptoms can be managed with a program of lifestyle changes, such as dietary changes, bladder training and medications.

Discussing OAB symptoms can be challenging, but so is living with the symptoms. You'll feel much better once the symptoms are managed!