# How Your Stress Affects Your Overactive Bladder

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## Overactive Bladder and Stress

You may think that your mental health is completely separate from your physical health, and you may think that your physical health is completely independent of your mental health. This view could not be further from the truth.

How you feel mentally influences how you feel physically, and since the opposite is also true, people cannot only attend to one dimension of their health. They must address their overall well-being. The case for this comes to life with the interaction between overactive bladder (OAB) and stress.

### The Discomfort of OAB

The signs and symptoms of OAB are well-documented and studied. While some consider OAB a disease and others consider it to be a group of symptoms, all can agree that OAB leads to:

- A sudden urge to urinate that is challenging to control
- Urge incontinency — an unexpected and unintentional loss of urine that follows a strong urge
- Having the need to urinate more frequently throughout the day — often more than eight times during a day
- Waking up multiple times during the night to urinate

Needless to say, OAB is a condition that can significantly impacts someone's life and daily routines. Something that others take for granted, like going to work, enjoying a meal out with friends, or getting a restful night's sleep, becomes a major chore and a difficult obstacle.

Without successful treatment and adaptations, OAB can become the most powerful force in a person's life.

### Stress and OAB: A Two-Way Street

Overactive bladder and stress share a strong and intimate relationship. It's obvious that increased OAB symptoms will lead to increased stress, but what people may not realize is that higher levels of stress also create more OAB symptoms.

This bidirectional relationship between OAB and stress is quite common between physical and mental health symptoms. Some other conditions with this two-way relationship include:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Fibromyalgia
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Lupus

- Lyme disease
- Heart disease

To address these conditions, a person must address their entire health and well-being. Too often, only addressing one aspect of health will not lead to the symptom improvement they are truly seeking.

**Taking the Steps to Improve OAB Symptoms**

The good news about a condition like OAB is that there are plenty of effective treatments. Even though these steps may not be enough to completely rid the person of OAB, it could be enough to return to a sense of normalcy in life.

Anyone hoping to improve their relationship with OAB should consider starting the process with at-home remedies like:

- Pelvic floor exercises. Kegel exercises are not exciting, new or groundbreaking, but they are effective ways to begin improving symptoms of OAB. These exercises involving tensing and relaxing the groups of muscles connected to the pelvic floor. Performing Kegel exercises just a few minutes several times each day can improve a person's well-being.
- Schedule bathroom breaks. If urges and incontinence are standing in your way of feeling well, it could be advisable to schedule trips to the bathroom at intervals that make sense for your needs. By frequently emptying the bladder, it takes some of the stress and uncertainty out of the equation. With the right pattern and cycle, a person could completely eliminate their incontinence linked to OAB.
- Maintaining a healthy weight. There is a clear connection between weight and OAB symptoms, with higher weights being associated with increased symptoms of OAB. Losing weight could relieve some physical stress and pressure from the bladder.
- Bladder training. This process involves delaying the act of urination for longer and longer periods after feeling the urge. Someone who has been successfully using Kegel exercises can aim to hold their urine for about 30 minutes at the beginning of the training and eventually build up to hours after they first notice the need to use the bathroom. Bladder training can help regain normal urination patterns.

If these remedies do not provide the desired results, a person may need to seek professional assistance. A professional may recommend:

- Biofeedback: a process that involves hooking a person up to electrical sensors that provide information back to the person about their body and what they can do to identify and adapt to the need to urinate. Biofeedback could be completed in just one appointment, or it may require multiple sessions.
- Medications: numerous bladder medications are available to help strengthen the muscles and areas around the urethra or to relax the bladder, depending on the type of symptoms a person is having.
- Bladder injections: people may think about Botox as a cosmetic treatment for wrinkles, but the medication can also help people with urge incontinence.

Remember, to improve symptoms of OAB, a person needs to care for their mental health as well. By performing relaxation techniques, engaging in therapy, and finding other ways to relieve stress, they will help limit OAB as well.