Symptoms and Treatment Options for Men With Overactive Bladder

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Overactive Bladder in Men

Overactive bladder (OAB) might affect more women than men, but it is still life-altering regardless of your gender. Here is what you need to know about OAB in men, including its prevalence, symptoms, causes, treatments, and outlook.

Prevalence

OAB is a fairly common problem. According to the Urology Care Foundation, up to 33 million Americans have OAB.

As many as 30 percent of people living with OAB are men. It is also possible that more men have this condition, but aren't seeking treatment.

One report from researchers out Vanderbilt University Medical Center and Louisiana State University in the United States, reports the prevalence in men increases with age, and like their female counterparts, OAB can affect men's qualities of life.

Anyone who thinks they may have OAB should talk to their doctor as there are many treatment options to help you manage the symptoms.

Symptoms

The characteristic symptom of OAB is the uncontrollable and urgent need to urinate, affecting both men and women with this condition. People with OAB need to urinate up to ten times a day.

Other symptoms and signs of OAB include:

- Difficulty to start urinating
- Straining or forcing urine out
- Having a weak urine stream

People with OAB also struggle with nocturia, the need to urinate several times overnight. During sleep mode, your body produces less urine, which means you don't need to wake up at night to use the bathroom.

Another symptom of OAB is incontinence. Incontinence, the need to urinate is so urgent and strong it leads to leaks or accidents, and incontinence may also occur with laughing, sneezing, coughing or exercise.

Causes

One of the most common reasons men experience OAB is because their prostates simply get larger as they age. If the prostate grows enough, it can disrupt urine flow.

Other reasons men may experience symptoms of OAB are:

- Weak bladder muscles
- Bladder infections
- Constipation
- Bladder stones
- Uncontrolled diabetes
- Being overweight

Bladder cancer can cause symptoms of OAB and its prevalence in the United States accounts for five percent of new cancer diagnoses, this according to the National Cancer Society. The average age for diagnosis is age 73, and it affects more men than women.

Anyone experiencing OAB symptoms with additional symptoms, such as blood in the urine, pain during urination, or frequent urinary tract or bladder infections should discuss their bladder cancer risk with their doctor.

Neurological conditions, including stroke and Parkinson's disease, can lead to OAB due to nerve damage that results in the brain sending incorrect signals to the bladder.

Temporary factors, such as overconsumption of fluids, especially caffeinated and alcoholic beverages, can lead to symptoms of OAB. Some medications or constipation may also increase your urine output.

The symptoms of OAB are embarrassing, which is why many people, especially men, don't seek treatment. But OAB affects every aspect of your life and resolving this life-altering problem starts with speaking to your doctor.

Diagnosis and Treatment

If you are experiencing symptoms of OAB, your doctor will have your urine tested to look for infection or stones. Your bladder function may also be tested to include how much urine is left in the bladder after urination and even measuring the pressure in and around the bladder.

Depending on what testing tells your doctor, you will be given a diagnosis and a treatment plan.

Your doctor will want to treat any underlying causes of OAB, if any. Often, OAB alone can be managed with lifestyle changes.

Lifestyle changes may include:

- Sticking to a regular bathroom schedule
- Managing leaks with pads
- Adjusting your diet
- Losing weight
- Bladder retraining, which includes learning to delay urinating when you feel the urge to go

If lifestyle changes don't improve your symptoms, your doctor may recommend medications. Alpha-blockers can help relax the muscles of the prostate to improve urine flow.

Other medications to treat OAB include ones that reduce bladder spasms and reduce the urge to go.

For some people, lifestyle changes and medications may not help because nerves in the body are sending the wrong signals to the bladder. In this case, doctors will use nerve stimulation to regulate the nerve signals.

With nerve stimulation, a small electrode is placed under the skin. Mild electrical currents are then sent to the urination muscles in the pelvis and low back.

The electrode can be removed once treatment has finished. One report in the journal, *Current Urology Report*s, finds nerve stimulation is useful for people who do not respond well to medication, are waiting for surgery or do not want surgery.

Surgery to remove part of the prostate gland is the last option for treating symptoms of OAB that are severe and not controlled despite numerous treatment attempts. Your doctor is in the best position to explain the potential benefits and risks of prostate surgery.

The Takeaway

Symptoms of OAB are common as you age. Men should not feel embarrassed to talk to their doctors so that they are appropriately diagnosed and treated.

The outlook for living with and treating OAB is usually good, and for most, OAB treatments are rarely invasive or life-altering. By working with your doctor, you can find symptom relief from overactive bladder and restore your quality of life.