Menopause and OAB

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Menopause and Frequent Urination

Do you suffer from overactive bladder? You are not alone. Over 16% of American women have this condition, and the prevalence is higher during menopause. OAB is unpleasant and distressing, and you may feel embarrassed talking to you doctor about this. However, you should seek treatment because it impacts not only your physical health, but also your work and overall the quality of your life, potentially leading to depressed mood and self esteem issues. The good news is that OAB can be managed in many cases without prescription drugs and surgery. Let's look at your options.

Get the Diagnosis Right First

Your doctor will take a detailed history and perform a physical examination. OAB is suspected if you urinate more frequently (more than 8 times a day, or more than once per night),if you have a strong and sudden need to urinate or if you have leakage. During the physical examination, your GP will test if the nerves that control your bladder work properly. He will likely order some urine and bladder tests to rule out possible infections and evaluate the function of your bladder.

Conservative Treatments are Recommended First

Your symptoms may improve simply by making some lifestyle changes. For example, you may have to reduce the amount of water you drink throughout the day. Careful to not restrict too much, as too little water can make the urine more concentrated and thus will irritate the bladder and aggravate the symptoms. Aim for 64 ounces daily. You know you drink enough water if your urine is light yellow or colorless.

Pay attention to what you eat. Some foods – for example caffeine, soft drinks, grapefruit juice and tomatoes can cause problems because they irritate the lining of your bladder

Avoid bladder irritants. Certain foods and beverages that are high in caffeine or acid (such as coffee, cola soft drinks and tomatoes) can contribute to OAB by irritating the lining of the bladder. Other food and drink you should limit include spicy foods, alcohol, citric foods, milk and milk products, sugar, honey and artificial sweeteners and preservatives.

Keep your pelvic floor strong and fit. You can train your muscles with Kegel exercises, and adding massage and stretching could also help. A healthcare professional can teach you how to practice other bladder training exercises, so you can delay the need to go to the toilet.

Meds and Surgery

If conservative measures don't help enough, anticholinergic medication may be used to control the symptoms. The use of estrogen replacement therapy (which may be indicated for menopausal symptoms as well) is

controversial for managing OAB. Surgical techniques are also available, but used as a last resort – they include injections with Botox for overactive bladder and nerve stimulation.

Alternative Medicine

A less known treatment, yet possibly effective is acupuncture. A 2005 randomized placebo controlled study featured in “Obstetrics and Gynecology “ found that 4 weekly sessions of acupuncture had been associated with significant improvement in bladder capacity, urgency and frequency , and the overall quality of life also improved .

A few studies also suggest that some herbal remedies – including an herbal mix called Gosha-jinki-gan may also be beneficial. Your acupuncturist may also use Buchu, Cleavers, Horsetail or Corn silk for OAB.