Can Overactive Bladder Cause Fatigue?

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OAB and Fatigue: Get the Sleep You Need for Better Symptom Control

Overactive bladder (OAB) can bring on a number of discomforts that interfere with every aspect of your life, and fatigue can be easily overlooked. After all, you have physical, social and emotional challenges to work through every day, and simply controlling your symptoms can take a good deal of planning and flexibility.

However, sleep deprivation is not only common in OAB patients, but it is also one of the most detrimental aspects when it comes to quality of life.

Experts suggest that average adults get between seven and nine hours of sleep, but when you live with OAB, that sleep probably comes in parcels. The problem when your sleep is punctuated with trips to the toilet is that small discomforts begin to build momentum, and before you know it, your body is performing far below its potential.

In order to stay in control of your OAB, you will need to understand why sleep is so important for your OAB management, and how you can change your nighttime routine for the better.

Nighttime Interruptions and Their Consequences

Many OAB patients struggle with nocturia, which is the need to get out of bed to urinate at least two times during the night. Unsurprisingly, this condition can lead to a number of discomforts during the waking hours, like low energy, chronic fatigue, irritability and poor immune function. If nocturia goes untreated for too long, OAB-related symptoms can worsen, and your quality of life can suffer in a number of significant ways:

Waking Often Interferes With Restorative Sleep

Every night, your body cycles through several different stages of sleep, and each stage is important for different reasons. The third and deepest phase of non-REM sleep is when blood is directed away from your brain and into your muscles, rebuilding tissue and re-energizing your body in preparation for the day ahead.

It follows that too many visits to the bathroom during the night will eventually interfere with these phases of rejuvenating sleep, and that can lead to chronic daytime drowsiness.

Lack of Sleep Can Compound Emotional Distress

OAB and depression are undoubtedly linked: one study found that 60% of OAB patients with urge incontinence experienced depression. But depression is also a known cause and effect of sleep deprivation; experts agree that a lack of sleep caused by another medical issue (such as OAB) will very likely make depression worse.

Low Energy and Fatigue Can Worsen Other OAB Symptoms

A chronic lack of quality sleep will guarantee sluggish mornings, daytime sleepiness and poor concentration. In turn, OAB sufferers who are starved for sleep will be more prone to falls and injuries, and they may find that work responsibilities and social life suffer more acutely.

Moreover, fatigue-induced forgetfulness can interfere with your OAB medication schedule and management.

Next page: available medications and practicing good sleep hygiene.

Medication to Fight Sleep Disruptions

Pelvic floor strengthening exercises are helpful in any OAB management plan, but it can take months for you to notice improvement, and sometimes they just are not quite enough to keep you comfortable and confident.

When you begin to lose sleep because of your urge incontinence, you may want to turn to proven pharmaceutical helpers before the sleepiness becomes a more serious problem.

- **Anticholinergics.** The most common class of drugs used to treat OAB, anticholinergics work by suppressing the bladder spasms that bring on the urge to urinate. Happily, side effects are generally mild, with the most common being dry mouth, and rarely will these drugs interfere with your sleep patterns.
- **Hormones.** An estrogen supplement can help in cases where OAB results from weak supportive muscles around the bladder, but desmopressin may be more helpful when it comes to beating nighttime bladder issues. This synthetic hormone mimics a naturally-occurring hormone that controls urine production – the more desmopressin in your bloodstream, the less urge you have to urinate.
- **Antidepressants**. The tricyclic class of antidepressants (such as imipramine) tightens the muscles at the neck of the bladder, but relaxes the bladder itself. In turn, you feel less urge to urinate, and since the main side effect is sleepiness, it can help you get the shut-eye you need. But not all antidepressants are created equal: selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) can interfere with REM sleep, and cause daytime drowsiness.

Good Sleep Hygiene for OAB

Although fluids are important to dilute your urine and prevent bladder irritation, you should stop drinking water at least three hours before bed to ensure a dry night.

When it comes to caffeine and alcohol, be even stricter with yourself: if you do not want to eliminate them altogether, at least limit your consumption to one serving a day, and enjoy it well before bed.

Your OAB bedtime routine will involve different steps than the average person, but if you can stick to your plan and closely monitor your habits, you should be able to put yourself at an advantage.

First, examine your medications closely, and speak to your doctor about possible alternatives that will not interfere with your sleep. Time diuretic medications appropriately, and keep a journal to track what you drink, when you drink, and how much you urinate, which should help you understand how and where you can make positive changes.