

# PATIENT FACT SHEET

# NOCTURIA

Nocturia is a condition that causes you to wake up at night to urinate. You do not have nocturia if you wake up for other reasons, such as hearing a noise or if you are thirsty. Waking up occasionally to urinate at night is normal. Nighttime is the time between going to bed with the purpose of going to sleep and waking up with the purpose of getting up to begin your day. If you wake up many times each night to urinate, this can cause you to be tired and affect your ability to enjoy life.

## POSSIBLE CAUSES OF NOCTURIA

- Your bladder is overactive.
- Medical conditions that cause your kidneys to make too much urine or you to be thirsty, such as diabetes.
- Medications (for example, water pills).
- When the muscles and ligaments that support a woman's pelvic organs weaken, you may find a bulge in the vagina. In men, an enlargement of the prostate (called benign prostatic hyperplasia, or BPH) can cause the bladder not to empty completely.
- Swelling in your feet or legs.
- Urinary tract infection.
- Congestive heart failure (a weakened heart that causes fluid to build up).
- Obstructive sleep apnea or snoring.
- High-salt diet.
- Drinking a lot of fluids before bedtime.
- Consuming food or drinks that are irritating to the bladder before bed (for example, alcoholic drinks, spicy foods, caffeinated beverages, carbonated drinks, and chocolate).
- Additional testing may be required by your health care provider to identify additional causes.

## HOW NOCTURIA IS DIAGNOSED

Your health care provider will likely check your urine for infection. They will ask questions about your health, medications you take, your medical history, surgeries you've had, and do a physical examination. Be sure to tell your provider if you are also leaking urine, having difficulty emptying your bladder, if it hurts to urinate, or if you see blood in your urine. If your provider feels you are keeping urine in your bladder, they may order further testing to decide if there is a blockage or nerve problem. You may be asked to tell your health care provider how much, when, and what type of fluids you drink. You will also be asked to keep a list of the number of times you go to the bathroom at night.



## **THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP PREVENT NOCTURIA**

Many times, simple changes in what you drink, how much, and when you drink fluids can be very effective for preventing or improving nocturia. Depending on the cause and how much you are bothered by getting up to urinate, your health care provider may recommend you try simple changes first before starting medications or undergoing more testing. For example:

- Good sleep habits, such as going to bed and getting up at the same time each day, having a comfortable room temperature, and keeping light and noise away, can help you sleep better.
- Drink plenty of fluids during the day, and limit your fluids in the evening by stopping 2 to 4 hours before bedtime.
- Perform daily pelvic muscle exercises, also known as Kegel exercises, to strengthen the muscles that help with bladder control. Your health care provider can teach you how to perform these exercises.
- If you know that you snore or someone tells you that you snore, you may have a condition called obstructive sleep apnea. You may need other tests to find out if you have this condition.
- Try to cut back on or stay away from foods or fluids that irritate your bladder. These can cause you to urinate more often.
- Using salt substitutes (sodium-free) and reducing salt consumption can help lower fluid in your feet and ankles. Compression stockings can also be worn during the day to prevent leg swelling.

## **PREVENT NOCTURIA CONTINUED**

- You can try to elevate your feet in the early evening hours. This will cause the fluid to go from your legs to go to your kidneys, and you can urinate it out before going to bed to keep you from getting up so many times at night.
- Bladder training is a way to train your bladder to hold more urine so you do not have to go to the bathroom so often. You can also try putting your bladder on a schedule. This is where you go to the bathroom every hour on a schedule only during the day. Once you can hold your bladder for an hour, you can try adding 15 minutes and continue to increase by 15 minutes until you reach 2 hours.
- If you have high blood pressure and diabetes, take your medications. High blood sugar leads to high levels of sugar in the bladder (called glucose). Glucose can irritate the bladder and cause you to go to the bathroom more often. Glucose can also cause bladder infections. When your blood pressure is too high, it can cause lower leg and ankle swelling, and can damage your kidneys.
- Cut down or stop smoking. Ask your health care provider to give you information on how to stop.
- If you have a bowel movement less than 3 times a week; have hard, dry, lumpy stools; or have painful bowel movements, you may have constipation. Ask your health care provider about treatment. Constipation can cause the bladder not to empty well and cause you to go to the bathroom to pass urine more often.
- Maintain a healthy weight.

## TREATMENTS

If you are still getting up at night to urinate after making simple changes to your diet and fluid intake, your provider may recommend starting a medication. Additional treatments and procedures may be appropriate. The following are some common treatments:

- Specific medications can help treat your nighttime urination. Side effects may include dry mouth, dry eyes, constipation, acid reflux, and confusion. Medications affect everyone differently, so you may have to try several different medications before finding the one that is right for you.
- If medications by mouth do not help, procedures such as nerve stimulation (gentle electrical impulses) or bladder injections can help relax your bladder to keep you from going to the bathroom so often.
- If the cause is due to a low level of the natural hormone vasopressin, it can be replaced with a medication.
- In men with an enlarged prostate (BPH), medications can be used to shrink its size or help relax the muscle in the prostate. In some cases, if medication doesn't work effectively, a surgical procedure may be recommended to reduce the size of the prostate to try to lessen the symptoms of frequent urination.
- If the feeling or seeing a bulge from your vagina (pelvic organ prolapse) is causing your bladder not to empty, you can be fit with a device worn in the vagina called a pessary. This can be worn to lift the bladder back into place. Surgery can also be done to lift the bladder.

You should discuss with your health care provider if you have any of the symptoms listed above or have concerns whether testosterone therapy is appropriate for you.

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## RESOURCES

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