Overactive Bladder (OAB)

Overactive bladder (OAB) is a common condition in women characterised by an uncomfortable and frequent feeling of needing to pass urine urgently throughout the day and night.

WHAT IS OVERACTIVE BLADDER?

OAB is an uncomfortable feeling of urgency to pass urine. This feeling of urgency occurs frequently throughout the day and night.

CAUSES OF OAB?

Normally, the bladder acts like a balloon, becoming larger as it fills with urine draining from the kidneys. A minor valve at the top of the bladder keeps the urine in, while the tube that drains the bladder, normally prevents leakage of urine. During normal urination, the valve relaxes and the muscles in the bladder wall contract helping the bladder to empty.

HOW COMMON IS OAB?

OAB is extremely common. It is estimated that between 1 in 5 or 6 men and women over the age of 50 have symptoms. It becomes more common with age. Women in the United States aged 70 years of age and older. About a third of people with OAB have incontinence.1

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF OAB?

Symptoms of OAB include:

- Urgent need to pass urine
- Incontinence (urge incontinence and stress incontinence)
- Frequency – needing to pass urine 8 or more times during the night

Symptoms can be quite distressing and embarrassing, and are sometimes severe enough for people with OAB to avoid social activities and intimacy, and even going to work. Nocturia can also result in daytime sleepiness. In some cases, the urge to pass urine is associated with urgency incontinence (so-called "smoking, hitting running ") or bladder filling.

How do I know if I have OAB?

1. Do you feel like you have to pass urine a lot?
   - Yes
   - No

2. How many times do you pass urine a day?
   - 6 or less
   - 7 to 11 times
   - More than 11 times

3. Is it hard to empty your bladder?
   - Yes
   - No

4. How often do you feel that you have passed urine when you haven’t?
   - Never
   - Once or twice a day
   - Several times a day

5. Have you ever had a sudden, strong urge to pass urine when you were out in public without a toilet nearby?
   - Never
   - Once in a while
   - More than once a week

It is very important to understand that it is not necessary to suffer from symptoms of Overactive Bladder. It can be treated.

HOW IS OAB TREATED?

Treatment for OAB depends on the results of the clinical evaluation and must be individualised for all the likely causes and contributing factors.1

1. Lifestyle changes

Lifestyle changes may help to reduce some symptoms of OAB. They include avoidance of bladder irritants (e.g., alcohol, caffeine, tomatoes, citrus, fatty and fried foods); ensuring fluid intake is adequate before going to bed; improving mobility (e.g., losing weight if you are overweight), managing any other co-morbid health problems and improving bowel habits and regularity (e.g., increasing fiber intake).1

2. Bladder retaining

Exercises to train and strengthen the muscles of the pelvic floor can help to reduce symptoms and lengthen the period in between needing to go to the toilet.1

3. Medication

Various types of medication may be helpful to manage the symptoms of OAB, depending on the type of patient and the symptoms that are prominent. Examples include:

- Oxybutynin, for bladder irritant or urgency incontinence
- Mestinon, for urgency incontinence
- Anticholinergic medication, for urgency incontinence
- Neuromodulation, for urgency incontinence
- Antidepressants, for urgency incontinence

Choosing a treatment for Overactive Bladder

There should be no confusion!