

Taking Control of Overactive Bladder (OAB)

Your doctor has just told you that you are suffering from an overactive bladder. First of all, you're not alone. An estimated 1 in 5 Canadians over the age of 35 suffers from overactive bladder (OAB) problems.¹

OAB typically causes some of the following symptoms:^{5,6}

Urgency	Sudden strong urges to urinate, with little or no chance to postpone the urination
Frequency	The need to urinate more than 8 times over 24 hours
Nocturia	Waking up to urinate 2 or more times a night
Urge urinary incontinence	Involuntary loss of a significant amount of urine. This may or may not accompany the urge and frequency associated with OAB.

OAB is experienced by both men and women.^{1,4} Most people will experience only the symptoms of urgency and frequency, without nocturia and no wetting episodes.¹ Others will have wetting accidents, called urge incontinence, in addition to the urgency and frequency. Women are more likely to suffer from urge incontinence than men.⁴

Coping behaviours

Despite the type of treatment you receive, it's important to remember that improvements in your symptoms may not be immediately obvious to you, and that it may take some time before you notice a difference. When suffering from OAB, many patients modify their activities and adapt their lives to cope with the condition, such as:⁸

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- Limiting daily travel to places and routes where they know the locations of restrooms
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- Reducing fluid intake
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- Avoiding sexual intimacy
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- Wearing pads or diapers
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- Driving themselves everywhere, so that they can control bathroom stops
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- Carrying extra clothes and pads/diapers with them at all times, in case of a wetting accident
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- Wearing dark or baggy clothes to hide wet spots and/or conceal diapers
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- Sitting closest to the door in order to be closer to the bathroom
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If you've adopted some of these behaviours, behavioural and medical therapy will help you to "train" yourself to gradually reduce them. It's important to keep in mind that no treatment is 100% effective, and that the goal of treatment is to improve your symptoms. You should also remember that OAB is a chronic condition, so it's important for you to follow your doctor's instructions and continue with your therapy.

Treatment of OAB

There are a number of different ways to treat OAB, including behavioural, lifestyle and physical therapy options, as well as medications. Surgery is the very last result until all other options have been tried and failed.

Behavioural and Lifestyle Approaches⁹

These various approaches may help to improve your OAB with or without the addition of medication.

Pelvic floor muscle exercises

- Often called Kegel exercises, after the doctor who developed them
- Strengthen the muscles around the bladder and the urethra, called the pelvic floor muscles
- Toning these can help support the bladder

Bladder retraining

- Involves making a schedule for bathroom visits, which puts the brain in control of bladder emptying
- Helps to gradually increase the time between visits, to a normal interval of about four hours

Biofeedback

- Uses a probe or electrode to help identify the pelvic floor muscles by emitting a signal when the proper muscles are contracted

Dietary changes

- Limit foods and beverages containing caffeine, alcohol or sugar
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Medications for OAB

There are a number of medications available in Canada to treat OAB. If your doctor has prescribed one for you, here are some tips on what you can expect.

When the medication will start to work

Some people will notice improvements in their symptoms in as little as a week, while for others, it may take longer. Make an appointment to see your doctor again two months after you start taking your medication so that you can both discuss and assess how it's working for you.

Symptom relief

There are a number of different "measures" to assess whether an OAB medication is working.¹⁰ Some of the things that you may notice once you start taking a medication are:

- Decreased number of urinations per day
- Decreased number of incontinence episodes
- Decreased pad/diaper usage
- Increased ability to complete tasks before having to urinate
- Increased amount of urine voided at each bathroom visit

Side effects

Some people experience side effects with medications for OAB. Dry mouth is one of the most common side effects associated with OAB medications.¹¹ If you experience dry mouth after taking an OAB medication, there are a few ways that you can relieve the symptoms:

- Chew sugarless gum or suck on sugarless hard candy to stimulate saliva production¹²
- Avoid eating salty or spicy foods¹²
- Avoid drinking carbonated, caffeinated and alcoholic beverages¹²
- Avoid using mouth rinses that contain alcohol, as they may dry out the mouth¹³
- Ask your pharmacist to recommend an over-the-counter saliva substitute or oral lubricant¹³
- Use a humidifier at night¹³

Talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you experience these or other side effects.

Congratulations!

By consulting your doctor, you've taken the first step towards OAB treatment that may help you **do more of the activities you enjoy**. For more information about OAB and its treatment, please call the number below or visit our website.

1-877-662-2825

www.overactivebladder.ca