

Treatments for overactive bladder

Contributed by Dr. Mohammed Akl, a urogynecologist at Banner Gateway Medical Center.

Question: My doctor told me I have overactive bladder. What is that and what can be done about it?



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Answer: There are 33 million women suffering from overactive bladder in the United States. Women with overactive bladder often complain of urinary urgency (a sudden compelling urge to urinate) and frequency (needing to urinate more often than usual day and night) and sudden leakage of urine before reaching the bathroom. The bladder wall is a muscle that is normally relaxed and only contracts during urination. Women with overactive bladder have abnormal spasms of the bladder wall, causing the above-mentioned symptoms.

The first line of treatment is medications that act to relax the bladder wall and avoiding bladder irritants in the diet

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(such as caffeine). Unfortunately, a considerable portion of women fail or discontinue medications because of side effects. Patients who fail medications may be candidates for simple non-invasive procedures to help with their symptoms. Uroplasty is an office procedure with no requirement for anesthesia. The procedure is not associated with pain or recovery time. Interstim is another procedure that can be done under sedation in the hospital on an outpatient basis with minimal recovery time. Both procedures have been reported to produce good results and are approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. If you have overactive bladder, ask your primary-care provider about those procedures and for a referral to a specialist.

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