



**Northumbria Healthcare**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Overactive Bladder Syndrome

Issued by Obstetrics & Gynaecology Department

This leaflet is to tell you about the overactive bladder treatments available.

## **What is overactive bladder syndrome?**

This is when the bladder contracts suddenly without you having control. You will experience a strong urge to pass urine; incontinence may occur if you are not able to reach a lavatory in time. You may need to pass urine more frequently than other people and also get up at night to pass urine more than once.

One sixth of the adult population have symptoms of an overactive bladder. The problem is more common in older people and the cause is not usually known. Some people have the problem for years but in other people the condition gets better after a few months.

## **What treatment alternatives are available?**

### **1. Lifestyle changes**

- Getting to the toilet. Make this as easy as possible. If you have difficulty with mobility, consider special adaptations such as a handrail or a raised toilet seat. Sometimes a commode in the bedroom is helpful.
- Caffeine. This is present in tea, coffee and some cola drinks. Caffeine can make your symptoms worse by stimulating the bladder and also it has a diuretic effect making you produce more urine. Try reducing your caffeine intake for a week to see if your symptoms improve.

- Alcohol. Some people find this makes their symptoms worse and reducing alcohol consumption may be helpful.
- Drink normal quantities of fluid. Cutting back on your fluid intake can make symptoms worse as more concentrated urine can irritate the bladder.

Recommended fluid intake is about 2 litres per day (6-8 mugs of fluid) but more may be needed in hot weather.

## **2. Bladder training**

The aim is to teach your bladder to hold more urine. In time your bladder will become less sensitive and less prone to contracting without warning.

You will be taught how to keep a diary recording the time you pass urine and the measured volume which you passed. Bladder control can also be helped by doing pelvic floor exercises to increase the strength of your muscles.

## **3. Medication**

Medicines in the class of drugs called anticholinergics may be helpful. They include Oxybutynin, Solifenacin, Tolterodine and Mrabegron which may be prescribed with different brand names. They work by blocking nerve impulses to the bladder which makes it relax and have increased capacity.

If risks and side effects are a problem or if the medication is not helpful another medication can be prescribed. It is best to try the medicine for 4 weeks before trying a different one.

Side effects include constipation, a dry mouth and blurred vision. The tablets can make angina worse and they may not be suitable for you if you have glaucoma.

#### **4. Botox treatment**

You may have heard of Botox being used to get rid of wrinkles by relaxing facial muscles. Botox can also relax the muscle in the wall of the bladder and reduce the symptoms of an overactive bladder. The procedure involves an injection into the bladder wall in 20 places using a telescope under a general or local anaesthetic.

Although the benefit of Botox treatment is good a common risk is the prevention of complete bladder emptying for a few weeks. If this problem is severe the patient may need to learn to pass a catheter several times each day to empty the bladder.

The Botox treatment may improve bladder symptoms for only a few months after which further treatment may be required.

Occasionally patients have “flu” symptoms for a few days after Botox treatment.

#### **5. Electrical Stimulation**

This treatment is provided by the physiotherapy department using a small machine to give impulses to the lower back or vagina. The equipment can be loaned to patients for several weeks to be used at home.

## **Useful contact numbers**

### **Wansbeck General Hospital**

Gynecology Outpatients 01670 564 140

### **North Tyneside General Hospital**

Gynaecology outpatients 0191 293 4374

Ward 6 0191 293 2568

### **Hexham General Hospital**

Woman's Health Unit 01434 655 353

### **The Northumbria**

Emergency Gynae Clinic 0191 607 2908

## **Other sources of information**

[www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org](http://www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org)

[www.rcog.org.uk](http://www.rcog.org.uk)





## **Alternative Formats**

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **03 44 811 8118**

## **Other sources of information**

### **NHS 111**

### **NHS Choices**

[www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx)

### **NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)**

[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

### **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: 01670 511098

Email: [northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk](mailto:northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk)

### **Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust**

General Enquiries **03 44 811 8111**

[www.northumbria.nhs.uk](http://www.northumbria.nhs.uk)

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