



THE SIMON FOUNDATION
FOR CONTINENCE

fact sheet

PROMOTING CONTINENCE - CHANGING LIVES

DEFINING NOCTURIA

Defining Nocturia

Although an estimated 40 million people in the U.S. are affected by nocturia, the word "nocturia" is not commonly known. According to the International Continence Society nocturia is "the complaint that the individual has to wake at night one or more times to void."

Being able to sleep six to eight hours at night without having to get up to the bathroom is what most adults would expect from their bladder. While nocturia may be present even at a young age the condition becomes more common as we grow older.

In those over the age of 60, nocturia is highly prevalent in both men and women for a variety of reasons.

Sadly, as with the many other symptoms of a misbehaving bladder, most people do not report nocturia to their doctors. Not consulting a doctor is often due to the misperceptions in our society such as: nocturia is a normal part of aging; nothing can be done about it; it really isn't that important; or it has no health consequences.

None of these are true. There are a variety of treatments for nocturia depending upon its cause. It is extremely important to work with your healthcare provider to discover the cause(s) behind your nocturia in order to properly treat it. And it is most important to understand that the more this condition is studied, critical health consequences of un-

treated nocturia are being reported. For instance, resulting sleep loss can contribute to a wide variety of damaging health effects.



Nocturia can also cause injury and falls when individuals have difficulty walking or seeing as they hurry to the bathroom in the middle of the night.

Nocturia should not be confused with enuresis (bedwetting). Bedwetting occurs when urine leaks while a person is asleep. Individuals with nocturia wake up dry and try to get to the bathroom, although leakage may occur on the way to the bathroom.

Causes:

The most common cause of nocturia is nocturnal polyuria. Nocturnal polyuria occurs when the bladder may be functioning normally, but too much urine is made during the night. This large amount of urine overwhelms the bladder's ability to store it until morning.

Although the daily total amount of urine created by the body remains normal, what changes is the day to night ratio of urine production. With nocturnal polyuria 1/3 of the 24 hour creation of urine occurs at night rather than during the day.

Some of the more common causes of nocturnal polyuria include:

- Too much fluid intake at night, including coffee, alcohol, or caffeinated beverages
- Swelling (edema) of the legs
- Sleep apnea - a sleep disorder that causes a person to repeatedly stop breathing for short periods during sleep
- Congestive heart failure -

a condition that affects the pumping power of your heart

- Diuretics - medications that help rid your body of salt and water
- Untreated diabetes

In addition to nocturnal polyuria, there are several other possible causes of nocturia. You may have global polyuria - a condition where an individual's body produces more than

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two liters of urine a day. Another potential cause is low nocturnal bladder capacity, which is when your bladder cannot hold much urine during the night.

Causes of low nocturnal bladder capacity include:

- Bladder over activity (OAB)
- Interstitial cystitis
- Benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH)
- Bladder malignancy

Some people have a combination of both nocturnal polyuria and low nocturnal bladder capacity, which is called mixed nocturia. Others simply sleep poorly and when they wake up during the night they will go to the bathroom although it is not the need to void that has caused them to awaken.

There are several conditions and health issues that also may contribute to nocturia by causing urine production to overwhelm bladder capacity during the night. They include: post radiation thickening of tissue; bladder surgery; and bladder stones.

You can see now, with all the various possible contributors to nocturia, why diagnosing the cause is important to your general health and the first step towards finding the treatment option that is best for your bladder.

Diagnosing Nocturia

Like most bladder issues, you will need to help your doctor understand your bladder by keeping a record of how much you drink in a day and

your voiding pattern, often called a bladder diary. Your doctor may ask you to keep a two or three day record. You will be asked to list medications and herbal supplements you are taking, if you have or have had urinary tract infections, and any other bladder related symptoms you can report.

Your doctor will also need to know when the condition started, the amount of caffeinated beverages and/or alcohol you drink each day, and if you have had a major change in your diet. In addition your doctor may order a urinalysis to check for infection in the urine.

Treatments And Management

Life Style Changes:

There are many changes you can make in your daily routine that may lessen or alleviate frequent trips to the bathroom during the night. Try lessening the fluids you drink in the evening, particularly bladder irritants such as coffee, caffeinated beverages, and alcohol. If you have been prescribed diuretics, ask your physician if you can take them in the afternoon, or at least six hours prior to bedtime.

Wearing compression stockings to help prevent fluid accumulation in the lower legs will help. Taking time to elevate your legs during the day is another method that helps redistribute fluids from the lower extremities and clear fluid from the body during the day.

Medications:

In addition to the changes mentioned above, your doctor may prescribe medications.

Again depending upon what you have learned about the cause of your nocturia you might be asked to take an anticholinergic, a medication designed to reduce the symptoms of an overactive bladder; a diuretic taken at specific times to regulate the timing of urine production; or Desmopressin, which is a synthetic version of vasopressin, the hormone that acts on the kidneys to produce less urine.

Always Report Nocturia To Your Doctor

Nocturia can be more than just a nuisance. As more interest is being paid to nocturia, and new research is being done, some studies have linked nocturia with an increased risk of death. What is known is that poor sleep negatively affects quality of life and general health and can make existing health conditions worse.

Loss of sleep can also impact your ability to drive safely and operate machinery, and lead to many other conditions such as: depression; mood changes; obesity; a weakened immune system and heart disease.

Making your doctor aware of nocturia is very important and obtaining proper treatment can improve your total quality of life. ■

The Simon Foundation for Continence

is a not-for-profit educational organization dedicated to helping people with incontinence.

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This Fact Sheet has been made possible by an educational grant from

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