

# Nocturia

## (getting up at night to pass urine)

This leaflet explains what nocturia is and why it can occur. It also gives advice on how to prevent or reduce this problem. If you have any questions please contact your GP, continence nurse specialist or district nurse.

### What is nocturia?

Nocturia is where you frequently wake up in the night and need to pass urine. It often increases with age. It is common with elderly people who may be getting up twice a night but more frequent visits to the toilet may indicate a problem that can be treated.

If you start needing to make several trips to the toilet at night you may find this distressing or your sleep may be disturbed.

### What causes nocturia?

#### Hormonal changes

You produce less anti-diuretic hormone as you age. This is a chemical that your body makes to help hold onto fluid at night, so you make less urine. Lower levels of this hormone mean that more urine is produced at night.

#### Prostate problems

Men's prostate glands often start growing with age. This gland surrounds the urethra (the tube that urine passes through before exiting the body). An enlarged prostate can press on your urethra and prevent your bladder from emptying properly, so you need to pass urine more often.

#### Bladder problems

- **Urge incontinence** (also known as an overactive bladder). This is where you have a sudden need to pass urine and may leak before you are able to reach a toilet.
- **Bladder infections.** These are usually caused by bacteria entering your bladder. Symptoms include dark, cloudy and smelly urine; a burning feeling or pain when passing urine; and not being able to empty your bladder completely.

#### Medical conditions

- **Heart problems.** If you have a heart condition, your heart and circulation become less efficient and you will notice swelling around your ankles. When you are lying down or your feet are raised up, fluid is absorbed into your blood stream and removed by your kidneys. This increases the need to urinate at night.

- **Diabetes.** High blood sugar increases your thirst, so you may drink more than usual and this leads to frequent need to go to the toilet. High blood sugar levels also irritate the bladder causing you to pass urine more frequently

### **Sleep related problems**

You are more likely to feel the urge to go to the toilet while you are awake. Therefore, if you keep waking up in the night or have problems sleeping, you are more likely to need to pass urine.

### **Drinking fluids**

Drinking a lot of fluid, especially close to bed time, will increase your need to go to the toilet during the night.

## **Is there anything I can do?**

If you have nocturia, first follow this advice:

- Reduce the amount you drink before you go to bed. For example, have your last drink at 8pm instead of 10pm. However, make sure you are still drinking the recommended daily amount. This is six to eight cups of fluid a day – about three to four pints or two litres. Reducing the amount you drink does not help, unless you currently drink large amounts.
- Have fewer drinks that contain caffeine, such as tea, coffee, chocolate and cola. These can irritate your bladder and change your sleep patterns, as can alcohol.
- If you regularly have swollen ankles, make sure you sit or lie down for about an hour during the day. Raise your legs and feet so they are at, or above, the level of your heart. It may also help to wear support stockings.
- Some medicines make your body produce more urine, or promote its flow. In many cases this is how the medicine works to treat the condition (for example, water tablets for high blood pressure). If you are unsure if your medicines could be causing nocturia, ask your doctor. Please do not stop taking your regular medicines without the advice of your doctor.
- Consider whether anything is disturbing your sleep. If your room is too light or too cold, this may wake you up. If you have painful conditions that disturb your sleep consult with your GP. Reduce any naps you take during the day to see if this helps you to sleep better at night. Also, avoid stimulants like drinks containing caffeine before you go to bed.

## **Specialist treatment for nocturia**

If nocturia persists you may have a bladder / prostate problem that requires treatment.

- **Prostate problems.** These may be treated in different ways and your doctor / nurse specialist will discuss the options with you. They may include treatment with medicines and possibly trans-urethral resection of prostate (TURP) surgery (please see our leaflet on TURP for further information).
- **Urge incontinence.** This is commonly treated using a group of medicines called antimuscranics, such as solifenacin or tolterodine. These medicines relax your bladder so that it can hold more urine.

- **Anti-diuretic hormone (ADH).** ADH helps to regulate water balance in the body. A lower level of this hormone increases excessive thirst and the need to go to the toilet. In a few cases of nocturia, taking desmopressin an hour before bedtime reduces production of urine overnight. Replacement of anti-diuretic hormone using the medicine desmopressin can help.

Low dose of diuretic in the early evening may help to unload excess fluid before bed time. When used during the day this will help the body produce more urine, so that any excess is passed before you go to bed.

Your doctor or nurse will explain the benefits and potential side-effect of these medications. They may take a routine blood test before prescribing medicine to help your nocturia.

## Useful sources of information

### Incontact

Provides support and advice for people with bowel and bladder problems and has a network of local groups.

t: 0870 770 3246

e: [info@incontact.org](mailto:info@incontact.org)

### Bladder and Bowel Foundation

Offers advice and assistance over the phone from specially trained nurses.

t: 0845 345 0165 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am – 1pm)

e: [info@bladderandbowelfoundation.org](mailto:info@bladderandbowelfoundation.org)

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

### Parkinson's UK

Provides support and advice for people with bowel and bladder problems and has a network of local groups.

t: 020 7931 8080

fax: 020 7233 9908

e: [enquiries@parkinsons.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@parkinsons.org.uk)

w: [www.parkinsons.org.uk](http://www.parkinsons.org.uk)

### Multiple Sclerosis Trust (MS)

Provides support and advice for people with bladder and bowel problems.

t: 01462 476700

e: [info@mstrust.org.uk](mailto:info@mstrust.org.uk)

w: [www.mstrust.org.uk](http://www.mstrust.org.uk)

### Disabled Living Foundation

Advises on and provides equipment for older and disabled people .

t: 0300 999 0004

e: [helpline@dlf.org.uk](mailto:helpline@dlf.org.uk)

w: [www.dlf.org.uk](http://www.dlf.org.uk)

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your nocturia, please contact your GP or:

- Ellie Stewart, clinical nurse specialist (CNS) Urogynaecology, 020 7188 3671, Monday and Tuesday
- Florence Ilegbusi , (CNS) Continence, 020 7188 2083, Monday - Friday
- Elaine Hazell, (CNS) functional Urology – 020 7188 6783 Monday - Friday

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets)

### **Pharmacy Medicines Helpline**

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

**t:** 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

### **Your comments and concerns**

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

**t:** 020 7188 8801 (PALS)      **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

**t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints)      **e:** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk)

### **Language and Accessible Support Services**

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

**t:** 020 7188 8815      **e:** [languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk)

### **NHS 111**

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

**t:** 111

### **NHS Choices**

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

**w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### **Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust**

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, and to become a member:

**t:** 0800 731 0319      **e:** [members@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:members@gstt.nhs.uk)      **w:** [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership)

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