

What is OAB?



An overactive bladder squeezes too often

Overactive bladder (OAB) is a treatable medical condition.

It can happen when the bladder muscle squeezes too often, or when you don't want it to. (Like when your bladder's not full.) That can mean:

- ▶ Strong, sudden urges to urinate (urgency)
- ▶ Often going more than 8 times in 24 hours, which may include waking up at night to go
- ▶ Wetting accidents (for some people)

There are many options that may help. They include:

- ▶ Simple changes to your lifestyle
- ▶ Medications
- ▶ Bladder training
- ▶ Pelvic floor muscle exercises ("Kegels")

Most patients use more than one of these options to succeed. Some changes seem like common sense, but they can have a big impact on your life. Even if you have tried one of these in the past, you may find a combined approach works best.

When you start treating OAB with medicine and other changes, you may notice improvement in just 2 or 3 weeks. But be patient! Most people improve even more over the next 12 weeks. Then, to maintain relief, keep following your doctor's directions. That means taking your medicine daily!

Bladder training

This plan will help you regain control of your bladder.

Goal: Urinating every 3 or 4 hours during the day without fear of wetting accidents.

Do your best to follow the same schedule each day during waking hours. You may need to get used to the idea that you can wait longer before going.

- ▶ Urinate each day when you get up. And each night before you go to sleep.
- ▶ Try to increase your time between bathroom visits during the day. Do you go every hour now? Try to wait 1 hour and 15 minutes.
- ▶ When you can wait that long without a problem for 1 or 2 weeks, try to increase the time. Try 15 minutes more first. Then, little by little, wait longer.
- ▶ Stick to your timing as much as you can, whether or not you have to go.
- ▶ Have a strong urge to go before your scheduled time? Work with techniques below to put off going until the scheduled time.

Control Tips

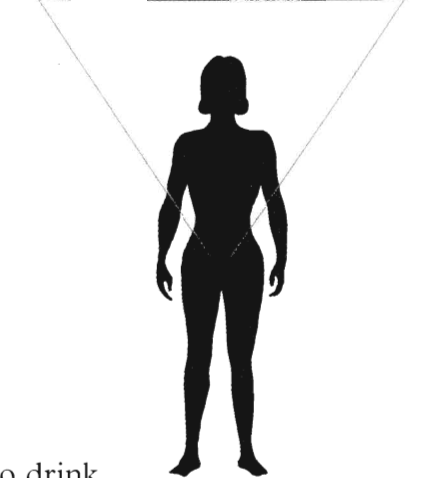
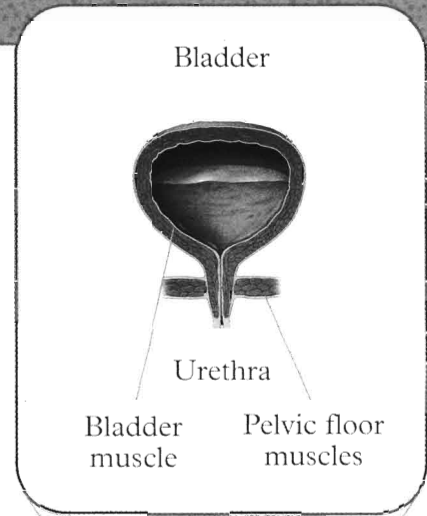
- ▶ Perform 5 quick, strong, pelvic muscle contractions. They'll help calm the urge. (See training on other side.)
- ▶ Try to distract yourself:
 - Count backwards from 100 by 7s.
 - Recite a poem from memory.
 - Sit down and take 5 deep breaths. Focus on your breathing, not your bladder.

Pelvic floor muscle training

Often called “Kegel” exercises.

They can strengthen the muscles that help hold urine in the bladder.

- ▶ Imagine that you are trying to control passing gas.
- ▶ Tighten your rectum for a count of 3.
- ▶ Then fully relax the muscle for a count of 3. (You should try to control both the tightening and the relaxing of the muscle.)
- ▶ Repeat 10 to 15 times. Do these at least 3 times a day. Each time you do your Kegels, switch between lying, sitting, and standing.



Other things you can do to help yourself



Watch how much you drink: Some people try to drink less to reduce OAB symptoms. But this can concentrate urine. That can irritate the bladder and make you constipated.

How much fluid you need each day depends on how much you sweat (from heat or being active). Most people should drink 4 to 6 glasses of fluid a day. At least half of your fluids should be water.



Avoid food and drinks that may bother your bladder:

Try to avoid these foods and drinks for 3–5 days. If your symptoms improve, avoid them as much as you can.

- ▶ Coffee and drinks with caffeine
- ▶ Carbonated drinks (like soda)
- ▶ Fruits, especially citrus
- ▶ Citrus drinks (like orange or grapefruit juice)
- ▶ Artificial sweeteners
- ▶ Spicy foods (like salsa)



Try to stay regular: Normal bowel activity is an “easy” nonpainful movement at least every other day. Avoid straining to empty your bowels. Eat fiber, drink enough and exercise to help stay regular.



Watch your weight: If you're overweight, weight loss can improve OAB symptoms.



Stop smoking: Chemicals from smoking can irritate the bladder.