



# Rushing to the Bathroom Again?

## You're Not Alone

*Every day thousands of Canadians of all ages begin their day by “washroom mapping” their schedule – making hard decisions about their work and social life based on whether or not they can get to a bathroom in time.*

**Overactive bladder** can be a disruptive and annoying stress that no one should have to worry about. Unfortunately, the urge to suffer silently can be as strong as the need to find a bathroom. It shouldn't be. Understanding the symptoms and talking about it are important first steps in taking control. **Read on.**



*"I just learned to live with OAB but it really made life difficult. My friends and family couldn't understand why I stopped doing a lot of the things I loved – taking dance lessons, doing tai chi in the park, taking the grandchildren for long walks. Then I let it slip out when I was talking to my doctor. I had no idea my condition could be treated. The treatment helped me so I'd encourage anyone with an overactive bladder to talk to their doctor."* – S. Rudko

**O**veractive Bladder – also known as OAB – is more common than many people realize. An estimated 1 in 5 Canadians over the age of 35, suffer from Overactive Bladder (OAB) problems. If you're within that twenty percent of people spending too much time racing to the bathroom, you might have Overactive Bladder. The good news is that, in most cases, OAB can be successfully managed and treated. OAB is not a natural part of growing older and it is not a normal condition at any age.

### WHAT IS OVERACTIVE BLADDER?

OAB occurs when the large muscle in the bladder, the detrusor muscle, contracts involuntarily. This causes a sudden and sometimes overwhelming urge to urinate, even when the bladder is not full. A person with OAB typically needs to urinate more than eight times over 24 hours. Other symptoms include waking up to pee two or more times in the night, and sometimes leaking before reaching the washroom in time.

Loss of bladder control is sometimes called "leaking" or urinary incontinence, which can be one of the symptoms of OAB.

might be an option, but is usually not considered until behavioral therapy and medications are tried.

The first approach to treating OAB often involves a conservative lifestyle change and physical therapy.

### IN THE MEANTIME ...

You may already be using one or more of a variety of absorbent products, including shields, pads, and undergarments to manage urinary incontinence. There are also devices that can be worn internally by women, to support the bladder and improve control.

### TAKING CONTROL

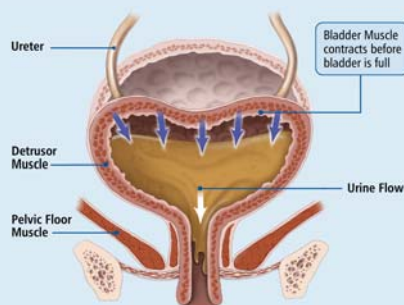
Now that you have a better understanding of OAB and its symptoms, the next step is to talk to your doctor. Together you can determine the cause of your bladder problem and most appropriate treatment. Your doctor might suggest lifestyle changes, exercise, physical therapy, medications – or a combination of treatment possibilities. In some cases, surgery





## HOW THE BLADDER WORKS

Every time you eat and drink, your body absorbs liquids. The kidneys filter waste products from the body fluids to make urine, which is stored in your bladder. Normally, the muscles and nerves of the bladder tell your brain when your bladder is full, but the urine stays in the bladder until you decide to go to the bathroom.



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Once you reach the toilet, your brain sends another message to the large bladder muscle, called the detrusor. This causes the detrusor to squeeze, or contract, and push the urine out of your bladder. At the same time, the support muscles that surround your urethra (the sphincter muscles) get a message to relax and let the urine through. If the messages or muscles don't function properly, you may have bladder control problems.

## BEHAVIORAL AND LIFESTYLE APPROACHES

Like any other muscle, pelvic floor muscles can become weak. "Kegel" exercises, named after the doctor who developed them, are designed to make these muscles around the bladder and the urethra stronger. As a result, the urgency and number of times you feel a need to pee can decrease. In combination with the Kegel exercises, your doctor might suggest biofeedback, which uses a probe or electrode to ensure you are exercising the right muscles.

The majority of people who use Kegel pelvic floor muscle exercises notice more than a 70 percent improvement.

Another technique involves retraining your bladder to empty according to a schedule for bathroom trips. It may take weeks or months until you effectively decrease the number of trips to a normal interval of about four hours. The good news is that when you're back on a regular schedule, your brain is in control, rather than the involuntary bladder movement.

## CHANGING YOUR DIET

Minor dietary changes such as limiting foods and drinks containing caffeine, which cause the body to lose water, can also help reduce OAB. Caffeine is found in chocolate, coffee and tea as well as many soft drinks (which also contain high amounts of sugar). Sugar, artificial sweeteners and alcohol should be avoided because they can irritate the bladder. It's important to drink an adequate amount of fluid, particularly water, and eat foods high in fibre to help prevent constipation, which can contribute to urinary incontinence.

## MEDICATIONS ARE ANOTHER OPTION

Your doctor might prescribe one of several drugs aimed at reducing the frequency and severity of large bladder (detrusor) muscle contractions. In many cases, combining drug treatment with other non-medical management options may provide the best improvement of the symptoms of Overactive Bladder.

You can ask your doctor or pharmacist about possible side effects of the available drugs to treat the symptoms of OAB.



## TALKING TO YOUR DOCTOR

Doctors see and treat thousands of people with bladder control problems every year. It's a very common medical condition and there's no reason to be embarrassed about it. To better prepare yourself, complete the V8 Overactive Bladder Assessment Questionnaire on the next page. You may want to use a "voiding diary" to record how often and how much you pee. A good example of the diary can be found at [www.overactivebladder.ca](http://www.overactivebladder.ca). The voiding diary will help you set goals and track your progress which you can discuss with your doctor, along with any changes you note or concerns you may have. Both the V8 and the voiding diary are good ways to discuss OAB with your doctor.

Remember — nearly everyone with a bladder control problem can be helped! So schedule your appointment soon.



## V8 OVERACTIVE BLADDER ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

The questions below ask about how bothered you may be by some bladder symptoms. Some people are bothered by bladder symptoms and may not realize that there are treatments available for their symptoms.

Please circle the score that best describes how much you have been bothered by each symptom. Add the numbers together for a total score and record the score in the boxes provided at the bottom.

Make appointment with doctor to talk about OAB

### HOW BOTHERED HAVE YOU BEEN BY...

	Not at all	A little bit	Somewhat	Quite a bit	A great deal	A very great deal
1. Frequent urination during the day?	0	1	2	3	4	5
2. An uncomfortable urge to urinate?	0	1	2	3	4	5
3. A sudden urge to urinate with little or no warning?	0	1	2	3	4	5
4. Accidental loss of small amounts of urine?	0	1	2	3	4	5
5. Nighttime urination?	0	1	2	3	4	5
6. Being woken up at night because you had to urinate?	0	1	2	3	4	5
7. An uncontrollable urge to urinate?	0	1	2	3	4	5
8. Urine loss associated with a strong urge to urinate?	0	1	2	3	4	5

Are you a male?

If male,  add 2 points to your score

Please add up your responses to the questions above

Please give this page to your doctor when you see him/her for your visit.

If your score is 8 or more, you may have an Overactive Bladder. There are effective treatments for this condition. Talk with a healthcare professional about your symptoms.



## WHAT IS THE DAILY IMPACT OF OAB?

Many people suffering from OAB experience a profound effect on their lives.

### OVERACTIVE BLADDER CAN INTERRUPT OR LIMIT DAILY ACTIVITIES WHEN IT:

- seriously interferes with daily activities
- makes it more difficult to do things
- makes it more difficult to do work
- makes it difficult to get a good night's sleep
- has a negative effect on sex life
- means that every trip away from home has to be planned

### OVERACTIVE BLADDER CAN ALSO HAVE AN IMPACT ON EMOTIONS AS IT:

- can be very stressful
- can make it uncomfortable being with people you don't know well
- creates concern about the potential of having an embarrassing accident
- creates concern about doing things away from home

It can be difficult to acknowledge that an Overactive Bladder affects so many aspects of your life *as well as the lives of those around you*. But this realization can help you move toward taking action.

Overactive Bladder is an ongoing and treatable medical condition. It is estimated that nearly 1 in 5 Canadians over the age of 35 suffers from Overactive Bladder, even though fewer than 9% of all potential sufferers are diagnosed. Doctors treat thousands of patients suffering from OAB every year. You owe it to yourself to see if treatment may help you return to a more normal life — and help relieve the anxiety, embarrassment, and isolation that may result from the symptoms of an Overactive Bladder.

[www.overactivebladder.ca](http://www.overactivebladder.ca)  
1-877-662-2825

## OTHER BLADDER CONDITIONS

Overactive Bladder is one type of bladder control problem, but there are other conditions that are sometimes mistaken for OAB because they have similar symptoms. If you have any of these symptoms, you should see your doctor for proper diagnosis and treatment. One condition, called urinary tract infection (UTI), is an infection in any or all parts of the urinary tract. If you have an infection, you might experience a frequent urge to go. Unlike OAB, you might also feel a burning sensation when you pee.

Men who experience frequent urination and urges to go may have benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), which is an enlarged prostate. It differs from Overactive Bladder because BPH can cause hesitancy, decreased flow during urination and incomplete emptying.