

Continuing Professional
Development

CPD

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60 Second Summary

Overactive bladder (OAB) is a urological condition that causes the urgent and frequent need to urinate. The urge may be difficult to stop and might lead to involuntary loss of urine (incontinence). With OAB, bladder muscles and nerves do not operate properly. It can also occur because bladder muscles are too active, contracting frequently causing an urge to urinate. Typically, adults urinate four to seven times a day. However, patients with OAB, may use the bathroom up to 30 times a day and may be unable to reach the bathroom before urination. Many Irish men suffer from this loss of bladder control, and often do so in silence. OAB is not just a medical problem. It can affect emotional & psychological health, and a man's social life.

It is especially important for pharmacists and their pharmacy teams learn about OAB. We are in an ideal position to identify subtle signs and symptoms that often people are too embarrassed to mention. Perhaps we can be more aware when patients are purchasing items such as continence pads. Perhaps we can take note when people are regularly purchasing products to assist in the reduction of urinary tract infections, such as cranberry preparations. We can offer support & compassion to customers, and have literature freely available and visible. This may be beneficial in opening conversations that allow us to provide expert advice whilst also empowering our patients to improve their own health & wellbeing.

We are the gatekeepers of primary healthcare, and the most trusted profession in the country - it is now time to use our accessibility & influence to focus on improving the health of our community.

1. REFLECT - Before reading this module, consider the following: Will this clinical area be relevant to my practice?

2. IDENTIFY - If the answer is no, I may still be interested in the area but the article may not contribute towards my continuing professional development (CPD). If the answer is yes, I should identify any knowledge gaps in the clinical area.

3. PLAN - If I have identified a

knowledge gap - will this article satisfy those needs - or will more reading be required?

4. EVALUATE - Did this article meet my learning needs - and how has my practise changed as a result? Have I identified further learning needs?

5. WHAT NEXT - At this time you may like to record your learning for future use or assessment. Follow the

4 previous steps, log and record your findings.

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Bladder Problems in Men - You are Not Alone

Overactive bladder (OAB) is a urological condition that causes the urgent and frequent need to urinate. The urge may be difficult to stop and might lead to involuntary loss of urine (incontinence). With OAB, bladder muscles and nerves do not operate properly. This results in inaccurate and often frequent signals to the brain to contract the bladder muscles to release urine when the bladder does not need to be emptied. OAB can also occur because bladder muscles are too active, contracting frequently causing an urge to urinate. Typically, adults urinate four to seven times a day. However, patients with OAB, may use the bathroom up to 30 times a day and may be unable to reach the bathroom before urination.

Many Irish men suffer from overactive bladder, however we don't know for sure exactly how many. That is because many men do not tell anyone about their symptoms. They may be embarrassed, they may think nothing can be done, or believe it is a natural consequence of ageing, so they suffer in silence. They often feel they can "cope" with their symptoms, hence most wait over a year before seeking any medical advice. We can however estimate that about one-

third of the population in Ireland is affected by one or more of the different aspects of incontinence, with the incidence increasing with age. An estimated 350,000 people over the age of 40 years are affected with overactive bladder alone.

Overactive bladder is not just a medical problem. It can affect emotional & psychological health and a man's social life. Many men who have incontinence are afraid to do normal daily activities as they don't want to be too far from a toilet, and this can really keep them from enjoying life.

Here is where we as pharmacists, and pharmacy teams have an important role to play. We are uniquely positioned at the heart of the communities we serve, and indeed are held in very high regard by our local communities - as only recently seen in the Ipsos MRBI poll where we were voted the Most Trustworthy Profession in Ireland for the second year in a row. Our local communities recognise pharmacies as being the go to for reliable, personal & professional advice. Counselling, education, and offering support to our patients are at the core of what we do. As one of the most accessible healthcare resources in Ireland, we are ideally placed

to identify and support those with continence issues, and therefore empower them to look after their own health and wellbeing. Engaging with our patients plays a pivotal role in identifying the often embarrassing topic of OAB & incontinence. It is important that we become more aware of subtle signs & symptoms that patients may often present with. However before we can recognise the issues, it is important we have a full understanding of how our bladder works, how it is controlled & how things go wrong.

What happens normally?

The brain and the bladder control urinary function. The bladder stores urine until you are ready to empty it. The muscles in the lower part of the pelvis hold the bladder in place. Normally, the smooth muscle of the bladder is relaxed. This holds the urine in the bladder. The neck (end) of the bladder is closed. The sphincter muscles are closed around the urethra. The urethra is the tube that carries urine out of the body. When the sphincter muscles keep the urethra closed, urine doesn't leak.

Once you are ready to urinate, the brain sends a signal to the bladder. Then the bladder muscles contract. This forces the urine out through the urethra, the tube



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that carries urine from the body. The sphincters open up when the bladder contracts.

Symptoms of Overactive Bladder

The major symptom of OAB is a strong urge to urinate that cannot be ignored. Men feel as if they "have to go" and worry about leaking urine before they can get to the bathroom. Normally, as the bladder stores urine the pelvic floor muscles contract to support the bladder and hold urine in without leaking. Bladder control problems occur when the pelvic muscles weaken. Other OAB symptoms include:

- Frequent urges to urinate (more than eight times a day)
- Leaking urine (incontinence)
- Incomplete bladder emptying
- Waking up in the night more than once to urinate.

As OAB can frequently lead to incontinence, a summary of the different types of incontinence are listed in the table below.

Types of Incontinence:

- Stress incontinence. Urine leaks when you exert pressure on your bladder by coughing, sneezing, laughing, exercising or lifting something heavy.

- Urge incontinence. You have a sudden, intense urge to urinate followed by an involuntary loss of urine. You may need to urinate often, including throughout the night. Urge incontinence may be caused by a minor condition, such as infection, or a more severe condition such as a neurological disorder or diabetes.
- Overflow incontinence. You experience frequent or constant dribbling of urine due to a bladder that doesn't empty completely.
- Functional incontinence. A physical or mental impairment keeps you from making it to the toilet in time. For example, if you have severe arthritis, you may not be able to unbutton your pants quickly enough.
- Mixed incontinence. You experience more than one type of urinary incontinence — most often this refers to a combination of stress incontinence and urge incontinence.
- Iatrogenic Incontinence .The word iatrogenic means a condition that is caused by a medication or treatment. Some drugs and chemicals worsen incontinence, but they may not necessarily be the direct cause. These substances

include alcohol, caffeine, diuretics, and lithium.

Causes of OAB in men?

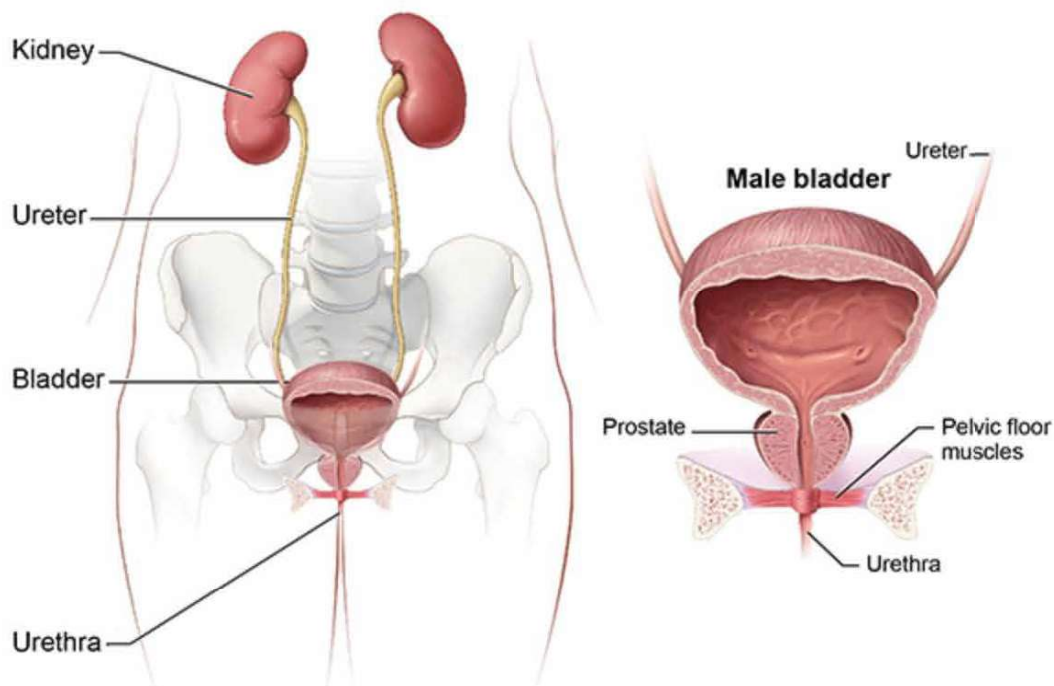
- Increased Age - Aging of the bladder muscle can decrease the bladder's capacity to store urine. Also, involuntary bladder contractions become more frequent as you get older.
- chronic cough
- constipation
- obesity - extra weight on your midsection can place unnecessary pressure on your bladder.
- bladder or urinary tract infections
- an obstruction in the urinary tract - A tumour anywhere along your urinary tract can block the normal flow of urine, leading to overflow incontinence. Urinary stones — hard, stone-like masses that form in the bladder — sometimes cause urine leakage.
- weak pelvic floor or bladder muscles
- loss of sphincter strength
- nerve damage
- enlarged prostate - Especially in older men, incontinence often stems from enlargement of the prostate gland, a

condition known as benign prostatic hyperplasia.

- prostate cancer - In men, stress incontinence or urge incontinence can be associated with untreated prostate cancer. But more often, incontinence is a side effect of treatments for prostate cancer.
- Neurological Disorders, e.g Multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, a stroke, a brain tumour or a spinal injury can interfere with nerve signals involved in bladder control, causing urinary incontinence.
- Family history - If a close family member has urinary incontinence, especially urge incontinence, your risk of developing the condition is higher.

Other lifestyle factors that may lead to overactive bladder include:

- Smoking - Tobacco use may increase your risk of urinary incontinence.
- Drinking
- Lack of physical activity - Being physically active may increase urine leakage, but not being physically active increases your risk for weight gain and decreases overall strength. This may make symptoms worse.



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Dietary & Medication causes:

Certain drinks, foods and medications may act as diuretics — stimulating your bladder and increasing your volume of urine., and worsening the symptoms of overactive bladder. They include:

- Alcohol
- Caffeine
- Carbonated drinks and sparkling water
- Artificial sweeteners
- Chocolate
- Chilli peppers
- Foods that are high in spice, sugar or acid, especially citrus fruits
- Heart and blood pressure medications, sedatives, and muscle relaxants
- Large doses of vitamin C

Impact on Quality of Life

Overactive bladder & incontinence can interfere with many aspects of a patient's life. Treatment for the underlying condition can ease symptoms, however patients may still have concerns about certain aspects of their life. Here are just some examples to think about:

- Sexual activity: Some men with overactive bladder or incontinence avoid sexual intercourse. It is important to remind our patients that they can still have sex, but advise them to take a few simple steps beforehand.

General advice would include:

- Avoid drinking caffeine or alcohol for several hours before sex.
- Avoid all liquids an hour before sex.
- Empty your bladder immediately before sex.
- Put a towel between you and your partner and the bed if you're worried about leaks.

Advise your patients to be open with their partner. Communicating their concerns can help alleviate any anxiety they may feel.

- Sleep disturbance and falls: People experiencing overactive bladder or incontinence generally need to get up frequently at night to go to the toilet. This disrupts their sleep,

can lead to sleep deprivation and increase the risk of falls which is a leading cause of elderly admissions to hospital.

- Self-image and social isolation: Studies have shown that people experiencing difficulties with overactive bladder or incontinence suffer from anxiety regarding the odour or staining of clothes and tend to feel more isolated from peers as a result of the condition. Social contact with friends is often avoided also because of embarrassment or concerns that people might comment. Furthermore, mental health issues, including depression and anxiety, commonly co-present in people experiencing difficulties with continence.
- Employment: Overactive bladder may impact on productivity and wellbeing in the workplace; for example, work can be interrupted by the need to take frequent toilet breaks.
- Leisure activities: Incontinence symptoms can prevent people from participating in active pursuits such as sports because of anxiety regarding potential leakages. This then tends to have knock-on impacts in terms of obesity.

Diagnosis

To diagnose OAB a urologist utilises a number of tests, beginning with a physical exam. The urologist will probably evaluate the patient's health history, and the patient may also be asked to keep a bladder diary to record how often he has the urge to urinate, urinates or leaks urine. More detailed tests include:

- Bladder stress test performed by filling up the bladder and having the patient cough to ascertain how much urine leaks.
- Postvoid residual volume – assesses whether the bladder is fully emptying by inserting a catheter through the urethra and into the bladder after urination to measure any remaining urine.
- Cystoscopy – a thin tube with a camera provides an interior view of the bladder to evaluate for structural problems.
- Urine sample, or urinalysis – this screens for the presence of bacteria and may rule out other similar conditions such as a UTI.
- Urodynamic testing – typically reserved for unusual cases and primarily measures urine flow to test for obstruction as well as evaluating urge sensation.

Treatment Options

OAB and urinary incontinence are not normal no matter how old you are. It is not necessary to learn to live with the problem, as there are many treatments available that will either cure or significantly improve the problem for most men.

Treatment for OAB depends on the cause of the problems and the treatment plan will likely include one or more lifestyle changes in addition to medication. In some cases, more advanced procedures or surgery may be necessary.

1. Lifestyle changes

Fluid management: Timing food and drink consumption around your activities may help you better control your urge to go. Instead of drinking large amounts of water or other beverages at once, drink smaller amounts at regular intervals throughout the day.

Bladder training:

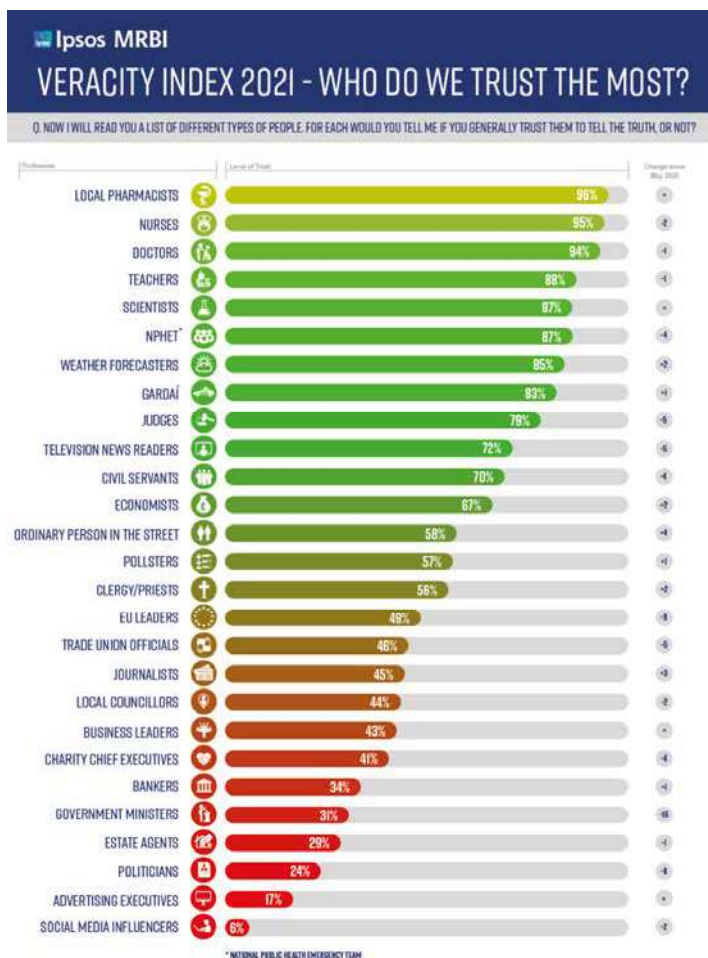
Bladder training helps the patient learn how to delay urinating when he feels the urge to go. This can involve:

- Double voiding, which is urinating, waiting a few seconds and trying to urinate again
- Delayed voiding, not going to the bathroom when the urge first strikes but waiting a few minutes



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- Scheduled voiding, or establishing set times to urinate
- Bladder muscle exercises, such as repeated quick flexing and releasing of the pelvic muscles when feeling an urge to urinate.

Pelvic floor muscle strengthening exercises: These exercises are also known as Kegel exercises. They can help you rebuild strength and tighten muscles in your pelvis and urinary tract system.

Other lifestyle changes may include:

- Be more physically active. It can help you lose weight, prevent constipation, and reduce pressure on your bladder.
- Cut back on alcohol and caffeine, and acidic foods. These substances can stimulate your bladder.
- Stop smoking.
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Eat more fibre, which can prevent constipation, a cause of urinary incontinence

2. Drugs and Medications

Several types of medicine are used to treat Urinary Incontinence

- Anticholinergics** - typically used to treat overactive bladders & urge incontinence as they block the passage of impulses through the nerves. Anticholinergics allow for relaxation of the bladder wall muscle. Commonly used anticholinergic agents for the treatment of incontinence include oxybutynin and tolterodine.
- Alpha-blockers**, are given for men who have an enlarged prostate. They help relieve some of the pressure on the urethra and can help men with urge or overflow incontinence to more fully empty their bladder. These medications include terazosin, doxazosin, tamsulosin, and alfuzosin. It can also be treated with drugs such as finasteride or dutasteride, which shrink the size of the prostate.
- Mirabegron** can relax bladder muscles and help increase the

amount of urine your bladder can hold. It can also help you more fully empty your bladder each time you urinate.

- Botulinum toxin type A (Botox)** can be injected into your bladder to help ease bladder muscles.

3. Male Incontinence Devices

Catheters: A catheter may help you more fully empty your bladder. This thin, flexible tube is inserted through the urethra and into the bladder. The urine drains out, and the catheter is removed. An indwelling Foley catheter remains in place, but it can cause urinary tract infections.

Urinary collection systems: A condom catheter fits over the penis and collects urine that leaks out. It can only be used for a short time. Prolonged use increases your risk for urinary tract infections and skin irritation.

Underwear guards: Specially designed absorbent pads stick to your underwear to absorb urine. This product won't stop the leaks, but it can help prevent any spots or wetness.

4. Surgery

Surgery is often a last resort treatment. Two surgeries are primarily used in men:

Artificial urinary sphincter (AUS) balloon: The balloon is inserted around the neck of your bladder. This helps shut off the urinary sphincter until it's time to urinate. When you're ready to urinate, a valve that's placed under your skin deflates the balloon. Urine is released, and the balloon refills.

Sling procedure: Your doctor will use tissue or a synthetic material to create a supportive pouch around the bladder neck. This way, the urethra stays closed when you cough, sneeze, run, or laugh.

Summary

In summary, overactive bladder & incontinence, whilst not always preventable, are highly treatable. We as pharmacists and pharmacy teams are in an ideal position to identify subtle signs and symptoms that often people are too embarrassed to mention. Maybe we can be more aware when patients are purchasing items such as continence pads. Do we take note when people are regularly purchasing products to assist the reduction of urinary tract infections, such as cranberry

preparations. Perhaps offering an empathetic ear to customers or having literature freely available and visible may also be beneficial in opening conversations and guiding our customers.

Community pharmacists and their teams play a key role in the care of the local communities they serve. It is our job to bring awareness to a variety of health conditions, and provide information & education that can empower our patients to improve their own health & wellbeing. We are the gatekeepers of primary healthcare, and the most trusted profession in the country - it is now time to use our accessibility & influence to focus on improving the health of our local communities.

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