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Overactive bladder does not have to be a normal part of aging

DR. BRIAN COHEN • NOVEMBER 9, 2010

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As adults, we all take for granted the ability to control our bladders and go to relieve ourselves whenever it suits us. If I am in the middle of a task and feel the urge to urinate, I am able to control this urge until it is convenient for me.

But the 33 million Americans affected by an overactive bladder unfortunately do not have this luxury.

OAB is a syndrome consisting of three symptoms: frequent urination, urgency of urination and sometimes the inability to control the urge, leading to incontinence or leakage of urine prior to making it to the bathroom.

It's often described as the "key in the door" syndrome, meaning once you arrive home, the sudden urge to urinate hits and is sometimes uncontrollable.

OAB is a problem that affects quality of life. You may be unable to visit grandchildren because you have to pull the car over every 30 minutes to urinate, or find yourself at risk of losing your job because your need to empty your bladder so frequently interferes with productivity. The need to awaken five or six times at night to urinate may leave you sleep deprived and depressed.

OAB affects nearly 25 percent of all adults older than 50. Although it becomes more common as people age, this does not mean that it should be an accepted part of aging.

Talk to a urologist about this problem. Your urologist then may take the following actions:

- Suggest behavioral changes such as drinking fewer caffeinated beverages.
- Refer you to a physical therapist to teach you bladder control techniques.
- Prescribe medications to help control OAB

symptoms.



Dr. Brian Cohen (Special to the Citizen-Times)



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- For those severely affected by OAB for whom medical and behavioral therapy is ineffective, your urologist may recommend an implant bladder control device called an InterStim (Medtronic) or injections of Botox (Allergan) into the bladder muscle in a short office procedure, both of which can be extremely effective.

November is Bladder Awareness Month, so discuss this common problem with your health care provider.

Victoria Urological Associates is holding an information session that focuses on bladder control problems Thursday at the Doubletree Hotel. For more information, call 254-8883 or 800-664-5 1 1 1.

This is the opinion of Dr. Brian Cohen, a urologist at Victoria Urological Associates and a member of the Buncombe County Medical Society. He is a fellowship trained urologist specializing in bladder dysfunction and incontinence.

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