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## HOW DO I TALK TO MY DOCTOR?

Making an appointment to see your doctor about a bladder control problem is an important step toward getting treatment. Make the most of your visit. A little preparation will help you and your doctor in determining the proper diagnosis and optimal treatment for you.

Remember — nearly everyone with a bladder control problem can be helped<sup>1</sup>, so schedule your appointment soon!

## WHO TREATS OVERACTIVE BLADDER?

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Overactive Bladder can be treated by your family doctor. Women can see a gynecologist to seek treatment or a urogynecologist — a doctor who specializes in conditions affecting the urinary and reproductive systems of women. In some cases, your family doctor or gynecologist may refer you to a urologist — a doctor who specializes in conditions of the urinary system.

These doctors can all effectively treat OAB, although they may use different methods. Your doctor or specialist might recommend or perform tests to help you decide the best way to improve your condition.

## SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

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When it comes to talking about your Overactive Bladder symptoms, it is important to know that you are not alone. OAB is a widespread problem. *But your doctor can assure you that it is usually a correctable problem.*<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps the easiest way to bring up the subject of Overactive Bladder is by talking to the nurse. When you call to make an appointment, or are completing pre-exam paperwork, simply state that you would like to discuss a problem with bladder control. That way, the doctor will be able to open the discussion and help you to talk about your symptoms.

If you visit your doctor for a reason other than Overactive Bladder, mention your symptoms on any paperwork that asks why you are seeking medical treatment. It may be easiest to start the discussion at the beginning of your appointment, when the doctor is asking you questions about your health. Don't wait until the end of the appointment to bring up your symptoms. The doctor will need time to evaluate them or to find out if they are related to another type of condition. He or she will also need time to describe your treatment options.

No matter which approach you choose, it is important to be straightforward and to ask questions such as:

- What type of bladder control problem do I have?
- What treatments are available to help me?

## WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE DOCTOR'S

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Before your visit to the doctor's office, you may want to complete and print out the V8 Overactive Bladder Assessment Questionnaire. Bring it with you to your appointment. This information is a very good starting point for a conversation about your symptoms and how OAB affects your life. Remember that your doctor has probably seen many patients with similar problems. (For tips on how to talk about your condition, see **Suggestions on how to talk to your doctor.**)

The doctor will usually review any written information that you provide. He or she will probably ask you questions about your health history (including pregnancy and childbirth experiences, if appropriate) and any medications you are taking. You may undergo a physical exam.<sup>3,4</sup> In some cases, the doctor may ask you to complete a Voiding Diary<sup>4</sup> or take tests to help find the reason for your problem.

**Voiding Diary** — The diary allows you to record the number of times you visit the bathroom as well as the amount of urine. It also tracks any urinary incontinence episodes and other information that may help your doctor learn more about your bladder control. This could include pad usage and fluid intake as well as your rating of the urgency you felt and amount of leakage that occurred.<sup>3,4</sup>

If you require Tests, your doctor or a technician can explain what will happen during each test. Some of the more common ones are included below.

**Urinalysis** — Urinalysis is one of the most common tests for the evaluation of Overactive Bladder. A urine sample is collected and analyzed to determine whether symptoms are caused by Overactive Bladder or another problem, such as diabetes or a urinary tract infection (UTI).<sup>3,10</sup>

**Stress or Pad test** — used when stress urinary incontinence is suspected, is a test that allows the doctor to see if there is any urine loss when stress is put on the bladder. It usually involves coughing, lifting or exercise by the patient.<sup>1</sup>

**Cystoscopy** — a test that involves inserting a thin telescope-like instrument, called a cystoscope, into the bladder through the urethra. This test allows a doctor to see the inside of the bladder to check for problems.<sup>1</sup>

**Urodynamic assessment** — this consists of several tests, some using ultrasound, that help determine how your bladder and the bladder muscles function. These tests help the doctor find out if the bladder fills and empties properly. They can help determine whether you have normal bladder sensations and whether you have sufficient bladder capacity (the ability to hold an appropriate amount of urine).<sup>4</sup> The tests may also measure contractions of the bladder muscle to check for involuntary activity that may lead to urinary incontinence.<sup>3,4</sup>

**Post Void Residual (PVR) Measurement** — This test measures how much urine is left in the bladder after urinating. It can be done with ultrasound (sound waves).<sup>1</sup>

Your doctor can explain how each of the test results will be used. The results help determine whether you have an Overactive Bladder or some other condition (such as a urinary tract infection) and can help identify the type of bladder control problem you may have. After the test results have been evaluated, the doctor will be able to give you a diagnosis and describe treatment options appropriate for you.