



# 14 NOCTURIA—GOING TO THE TOILET AT NIGHT

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## WHAT IS NOCTURIA?

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Nocturia is when a person has to wake up at night to pass urine. If this happens more than twice a night, it can be a problem.

Nocturia is common in older people. It can cause problems in day-to-day life. It can upset your sleep and put you at risk of falls, if you get up in the dark to pass urine. Also, when you have to wake up, you may not be able to get back to sleep and then you might not function as well through the day. You may sleep in the day and then not be able to sleep well at night. Changes like this to your sleep patterns may even make the problem worse: you may be more aware of your filling bladder and so feel like you need to pass urine more often.

Having to wake up once or more each night to pass urine increases as you age. It has been found that one in two women, and two out of three men, aged 50 to 59 years have a problem with Nocturia. It is even more common as you get older—seven out of ten women, and nine out of ten men, over the age of 80 years have Nocturia.

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## WHAT ARE THE COMMON CAUSES OF NOCTURIA?

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- common heart and kidney problems;
- swollen ankles;
- taking fluid tablets in the night-time;
- drinking large amounts of fluids, alcohol and caffeine drinks (tea, coffee and cola) before going to bed at night;
- poorly controlled diabetes (Type 1 or Type 2);
- Diabetes Insipidus (a rare hormone problem that causes severe thirst and urine loss);
- changes in position (going from upright in the day to lying flat at night means more blood can flow over the kidneys, so more night-time urine is made);
- upset or over-sensitive bladder (such as a bladder infection);
- overactive bladder (such as after a stroke);
- pregnancy;
- broken sleep, such as going to the toilet just because you are awake; and/or
- constipation or an enlarged prostate can press on the bladder neck and not let the bladder empty right out. This can cause urine to dribble or overflow.



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In healthy young people, a hormone called antidiuretic hormone stops the kidneys making much urine during sleep. With age, the body makes less of this hormone, so the kidneys make as much or even more urine during sleep as they do in the day. This means the bladder will need to be emptied more often through the night.

**Note:** Some people think if they cut down how much water they drink through the day they may cut down on night-time problems. This is not right. Not having enough to drink can cause lack of fluids and constipation. It can also make the urine more concentrated. This can upset the bladder and make you need to go to the toilet more often. Not drinking enough water can also shrink the bladder muscle so the bladder does not hold as much urine, which can make the need to pass urine through the night even worse.

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## HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU HAVE NOCTURIA?

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You should talk to your doctor if you think you have Nocturia. It may not be a simple health problem.

To find out more about your Nocturia, your doctor may ask you about:

- your past health;
- bladder problems;
- the drugs you take (such as, what time you take your fluid tablets); and
- broken sleep.

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## YOUR DOCTOR MIGHT ALSO:

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- check if you have any of the causes of Nocturia, such as those noted above;
- test your urine for a bladder infection;
- ask you to keep a chart to check:
  1. what, when and how much you drink;
  2. when and how much urine you pass;
  3. when you go to bed and get up; and
  4. arrange for tests such as bladder, kidneys, urine, and blood tests.



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## HOW CAN NOCTURIA BE TREATED?

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It is important that any causes of Nocturia get treated or that you are referred to the right specialist.

Some suggested treatments could be:

- cutting back on how much caffeine and alcohol you drink, mainly before going to bed at night;
- checking the times you take fluid tablets;
- wearing support stockings for swollen ankles;
- resting with your legs up, in the afternoon, for a few hours;
- lighting your path to the toilet (such as a night light); and/or
- placing a commode or bright coloured bucket for use at the bedside.

Your doctor may prescribe a nasal spray or drugs to cut down how much urine you make at night-time. Your doctor may also refer you to a specialist who will discuss other treatments with you. These may be drugs that treat the Nocturia or treat the cause of the problem.

Some of the health professionals you may be referred to can include a continence physiotherapist, continence nurse advisor, urologist or renal physician.



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## SEEK HELP

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If you have any concerns or queries about Nocturia, talk to your local doctor, physiotherapist, or continence nurse advisor.

If you have any questions about bladder control, you can contact:

Expert Advisors on the National Continence Helpline for free:

- information;
- advice; and
- leaflets.

On FREECALL 1800 33 00 66 (8 am to 8 pm Monday to Friday), or

Visit the website: [www.bladderbowel.gov.au](http://www.bladderbowel.gov.au)

The Helpline can arrange for an interpreter through the Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS). Please ring 13 14 50 Monday to Friday and ask for the Helpline.

**Seek help for Nocturia as it can be treated.**

\* Calls from mobile telephones are charged at applicable rates.

