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Question:

Recently I turned 50 and noticed that I have to get up too many times at night to urinate. Is this normal?

Answer:

If you get up more than once a night to urinate and you feel that this is disrupting your sleep you have *nocturia*. Many people with this problem also find that they leak on the way to the bathroom at night. When your bladder prevents you from sleeping well night after night, this can have serious health consequences. If you don't sleep well, you are more prone to injuring yourself driving or walking. You can become depressed. Your personal relationships and your job may suffer because you are tired.

How do I know if it's nocturia?

It is important to try and determine whether it is really your bladder that is waking you up. If you wake up with an immediate strong urge to urinate, then your bladder is likely to be the culprit. However, some people wake up due to anxiety, insomnia or noise and then get in the habit of going to empty their bladder. If this is the case, then you still need to seek treatment for your sleep problem, but you may want to consult your primary care physician first.

What causes nocturia?

Increased urine output at night: Age and certain medical problems can shift the majority of urine production to the time when you are lying down and/or asleep.

Overactive Bladder. Involuntary contraction of the bladder muscle or increased sensitivity to normal amounts of urine in the bladder can occur at night waking you up with a strong urge.

Excessive fluid intake: Drinking much more than you need too - or drinking a large amount of fluids in the evening can force you to get up too many times at night.

Alcohol and Caffeine: A 'night cap' of wine, whiskey, coffee or tea may be contributing to your nighttime problems.

Incomplete bladder emptying. An enlarged prostate in men can cause difficulty in emptying the bladder adequately causing more nighttime urinations.

How can it be treated?

Adjusting your drinking habits, especially cutting down on fluids after dinner time, alcohol and caffeine.

Lying down during the day to encourage your body to make more urine before you go to bed at night.

Medications for overactive bladder such as tolterodine, oxybutynin and imipramine.

Medications for enlarged prostates in men such as terazosin, tamsulosin, doxazosin, alfuzosin, dutasteride, and finasteride.