
Nocturnal Polyuria

Frequently Asked Questions

Why does it happen?

Nocturnal polyuria means passing large volumes of urine at night but normal amounts during the day. There are a number of possible reasons why you may need to get up at night to pass urine; these may include:

- ~ poor sleep patterns
- ~ your bladder or prostate are causing you trouble
- ~ you are producing too much urine at night (nocturnal polyuria)
- ~ any combination of the above

What will the doctor ask me to do?

In order for your doctor to work out the main cause for your symptoms, he/she will ask you to complete a frequency/volume chart (voiding diary) on which you record the time and amount of urine you pass every time you go to the toilet as well as the amount of fluid you consume.

Why do I produce too much urine at night?

The body normally produces a chemical from the brain at night which tells the kidneys to cut down the amount of urine produced whilst you are asleep. This chemical is called antidiuretic hormone (or ADH). When you are young, ADH reduces urine production so that you produce less than a fifth of the 24-hour total at night.

As you get older, especially after the age of 65, you should still be producing less than a third of your total urine output at night. When you produce too much urine overnight (i.e. more than one third of the daily total), this is called nocturnal polyuria. There are a number of causes:

- ~ you may not be producing enough ADH (vasopressin)
- ~ you drink too much in the evening; this may include eating foods with a high water content (e.g. fruit, vegetables, salads, pasta & rice)
- ~ you use the night-time to get rid of any excess water from your body.

Many people develop swelling or puffiness of the ankles in the evening but notice that they are normal, or less puffy, in the morning. This is because, when you lie down, the water which causes the puffiness passes into the bloodstream and is converted into urine by the kidneys. Once this urine is passed to the bladder, it wakes you up during the night with a full bladder.

How can I help myself?

Your doctor will, of course, ask you about your eating and drinking habits in the evening and will examine you to see if there is any ankle swelling. However, there are some things you can do yourself:

- ~ adjust your drinking and eating to take in less fluid in the evening
- ~ eat most of your water-containing food earlier in the day
- ~ if your ankles are swollen, put your feet up as often as possible to help your body get rid of the water during the day.
- ~ increase your exercise levels (especially walking) because this helps to push excess fluid back into the circulation where it belongs

What if these simple measures do not help?

If you have tried your best to deal with the problem but you still produce too much urine at night, your doctor may try to help you by:

- ~ Prescribing a water tablet (diuretic) which makes your kidneys produce more urine. If this is given at tea-time, it can encourage your kidneys to expel the excess water in the evening instead of at night, so you sleep better.
- ~ Prescribing synthetic ADH (either in tablet form or as a nasal spray) taken just before bed-time. This must be used with caution in older people because it may precipitate water retention which can put strain upon the heart in patients with heart problems or high blood pressure.
- ~ Prescribing a special tablet (Imipramine) to inhibit bladder activity (often used in children who wet the bed at night)

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~ Prescribing a tablet that relaxes your prostate gland at night-time.

~ Prescribing a tablet that relaxes your bladder.

What if I have other concerns?

If you have any concerns or worries about your symptoms or about any other aspect of this problem, you should always discuss them with your family doctor, or urologist.

Who can I contact for more help or information?

Dr Peter Campbell

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If you wish to retain a copy for you own records, one will be provided.

I have read this information sheet and I accept the information it provides.

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