

Contact Us Toll Free at 1.866.208.3430

Bladder Symptoms

Education

Up to 80% of multiple sclerosis (MS) patients will develop bladder symptoms to some degree throughout the progression of their disease.

Bladder symptoms may include:

- Increased frequency or urgency of urination
- Hesitancy in starting to urinate
- Urinating often at night
- Incontinence (inability to control urination)

These symptoms develop because MS can damage nerves that control bladder function. A common problem that develops in MS patients is called “spastic” bladder. When this occurs, the bladder cannot hold a normal amount of urine, nor does empty completely. Retaining urine in the bladder puts patients at increased risk of developing urinary tract infections. Fortunately these bladder symptoms are often managed successfully.

Tips for Controlling Bladder Symptoms

The first step in gaining control over bladder symptoms is to modify fluid intake. Abstaining from fluids and caffeine after dinner will decrease symptoms at bedtime and lessen sleep disturbance. Emptying the bladder just before bedtime may decrease waking up in the night. It is best to eliminate caffeine completely if you are able to do so, as it increases urination. Drinking at least six to eight full glasses of water a day will improve bladder symptoms by diluting the urine. Your physician may prescribe medications to alleviate bladder symptoms as well.

Treatment Options to Discuss with Your Provider

There are various options your health care provider can consider for the treatment of bladder symptoms and selection will depend on the type of symptoms you are experiencing. Medications that treat incontinence include:

- Oxybutynin (Ditropan®)
- Tolterodine (Detrol®)
- Trospium (Sanctura®)

Other options for treatment include mechanical aids such as:

- Catheters
- Urethral inserts
- External urethral barriers

Some may benefit from “bladder training” which uses a bathroom schedule to slowly increase the time between urination. Talk to your doctor about your symptoms and what’s best for you.

For questions or concerns regarding any of the above statements or recommendations, please feel free to contact Diplomat Specialty Pharmacy Toll Free at 1.866.208.3430.

Education

Bowel problems are often a concern for patients with MS. The most common symptom is constipation, although diarrhea and fecal incontinence (inability to control bowels) can occur rarely. Constipation can be caused by too little fluid intake and by a slowing down in the intestinal tract. Being less active can also cause constipation.

Examples of Bowel Symptoms

- Constipation (most common)
- Diarrhea
- Fecal incontinence (rare)

Tips for Controlling Bowel Symptoms

- Drink at least 6 to 8 glasses of fluid (preferably water) daily.
- Eat plenty of fiber in your diet. The minimum target for daily fiber intake is 25 grams for women and 38 grams for men. Foods that are high in fiber include fresh fruits and vegetables, legumes, and whole grain breads and cereals, especially those with bran.
- Establish a regular time and schedule for emptying the bowels. Do not wait longer than 2 to 3 days between bowel movements.
- Use medicines such as stool softeners as recommended by your health care provider.
- Exercise as tolerated and as directed by your health care provider. Physical activity can help to stimulate the intestines. Walking for 20-30 minutes is a great place to start.

Treatment Options to Discuss with Your Provider

Below are some common over-the-counter medications that treat constipation. Talk with your health care provider before starting any over-the-counter medication.

- Docusate—an over-the-counter stool softener
- Bisacodyl—an over-the-counter stimulant laxative
- Sennosides—an over-the-counter stimulant laxative
- Polyethylene Glycol 3350—a bulk-forming laxative

For diarrhea :

- Loperamide—an over-the-counter anti-diarrheal