

Pelvic Floor PT for Overactive Bladder



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Have you ever had a strong, almost overwhelming urge to urinate? Imagine having that urge countless times per day, including overnight. Now imagine the urge becoming so strong that you leak. If this describes you, you may have overactive bladder (OAB).

OAB is defined as “urinary urgency, usually accompanied by frequency and nocturia (waking at night to urinate), with or without urgency urinary incontinence, in the absence of a urinary tract infection (UTI) or other obvious pathology.”¹

The effects of OAB can be far-reaching, leading to increased physician visits for treatment and management of related issues, including fall-related injuries. OAB symptoms can also cause anxiety and worry, negatively impacting quality of life.

In order to accurately diagnose OAB, your doctor should perform a thorough medical history, including medications, and review of your bathroom and dietary habits, as well as a physical examination.

It is important to rule out other medical causes, including infection, diabetes, sleep apnea, or neurological conditions.

The American Urological Association lists conservative methods, including behavioral training, lifestyle modification, and symptom management, as the first-line treatment for OAB. Second-line treatment includes medication. Interestingly enough, pelvic floor physical therapists are uniquely equipped to provide first-line treatment!

Pelvic floor physical therapists (PT) are trained to assess your pelvic floor muscles and how they function. Have you ever had to pee really bad but had to hold it back? You were contracting your pelvic floor to do that! Depending on your specific symptoms and presentation, during a pelvic floor PT visit you will learn specific strategies to help reduce your urge to use the bathroom; this is called urge suppression. You will also learn ways to lengthen the amount of time between voids, and you will identify foods and drinks that worsen your symptoms. Often, weakness or tightness in your

pelvic floor can contribute to OAB symptoms. In PT, you will also learn how to tune into your pelvic floor muscles so that they can assist you with urge suppression. Very often, this first-line treatment can provide significant relief of OAB symptoms without the need for medications.

If you are experiencing any of the above issues, call your doctor and then reach out to me at catherine@breathe-blossom.com. Physical therapy can be an invaluable resource for addressing this distressing condition, and I would love to help.



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Reference: Willis-Gray MG, Dieter AA, Geller EJ. Evaluation and management of overactive bladder: strategies for optimizing care. Research and Reports in Urology. 2016;8:113-122.