

To pee OR NOT TO pee

It's two o'clock in the morning and time to get up and pee again. Getting an uninterrupted night of sleep seems impossible after middle age.

You might be surprised to learn that frequent urination may be related to obstructive sleep apnea and you may need to see a sleep specialist for diagnosis and treatment. If you urinate more than once during the night, it is abnormal. In an ideal world, you wouldn't wake at all. These awakenings can disrupt sleep and contribute to insomnia, especially when they occur regularly. What causes frequent urination at night? Nocturia.

In both women and men, nightly awakenings to urinate are commonly associated with poor sleep, even when other symptoms such as insomnia, mood swings and excessive daytime sleepiness are reported. In fact, nocturia may be the single most common factor associated with poor sleep among the elderly.

Many people, including doctors, have the wrong idea about the cause of nocturia. It is thought that men of a certain age experience frequent urination from an enlarged prostate. Women can experience it from a hyperactive bladder, loss of bladder control, or menopause. Prescription medications are dispensed with varied results. Men may have painful procedures to reduce the prostate's constriction of the urethra. But what if something else is to blame?

When growing older, there is another trend that often becomes apparent in sleep: obstructive sleep apnea.

In fact, the risk increases for women at the time of menopause and is characterized by repeated pauses in breathing that cause frequent awakenings, sleep fragmentation, drops in blood oxygen levels and nocturia. Sleep apnea is associated with other typical symptoms, including:

- Snoring
- Excessive daytime sleepiness
- Insomnia
- Witnessed pauses in breathing
- Gasping or choking in sleep
- Dry mouth at night
- Palpitations
- Heartburn
- Night sweats
- Teeth grinding
- Morning headaches
- Concentration and memory problems
- Mood problems

If any of these symptoms are present, it may be necessary to explore sleep apnea as a potential cause of nocturia. Another significant contributor is alcohol. It triggers you to wake and urinate frequently because it affects both snoring and sleep apnea.

Many people feel they get up to urinate because they are awake and their bladder feels full. They must have awoken because they need to use the restroom and will not be able to sleep unless they do, not realizing that sleep apnea may cause these awakenings ... but why is the bladder full?

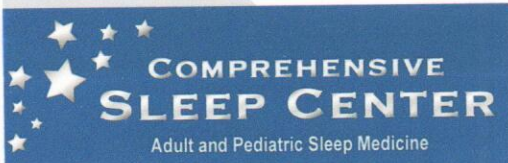
The body naturally releases anti-diuretic hormone (ADH) during sleep to prevent the need to wake to urinate. It works to shut down the kidneys, preventing movement of fluids from the blood vessels to the bladder. The bladder is like a storage balloon, during sleep ADH prevents the need to wake to empty. Even if you have poor bladder function, or an enlarged prostate these other issues do not matter.

Studies show that sleep apnea changes the release of ADH. When an apnea event occurs, the body responds by preventing the release of ADH thus causing urine to produce, filling the bladder and prompting awakenings to pee during sleep.

When sleep apnea is successfully treated, the urge to pee at night diminishes and the quality of sleep is greatly improved. Treatment doesn't fix the bladder nor does it shrink the prostate. It simply treats one of the most common and often overlooked causes of nighttime urination. In doing so, those trips to the bathroom decline and often are eliminated.

If you believe that you are getting up to pee because you drank too much in the evening, or you're just getting older, or have been diagnosed with an enlarged prostate or a weak bladder, think again. If you have other symptoms associated with sleep apnea, meet with Dr. Mamedov to get an evaluation and treatment so you can begin to sleep through the night again.

Call Comprehensive Sleep Center at 517-755-6888 to schedule your consultation.



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