



# NOCTURIA - GOING TO THE TOILET AT NIGHT

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## Seek help for nocturia as it can be treated

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### What is nocturia?

Nocturia is when a person has to wake up at night to pass urine. It is a common problem. It is even more common as we get older.

Nocturia can upset your sleep and put you at risk of falls when you get up in the dark to pass urine. Also you may not be able to get back to sleep so you might not function as well through the day. You may sleep in the day and then not be able to sleep well at night.

Such changes to your sleep patterns can make the problem worse. You may be more aware of your bladder filling and feel like you need to pass urine more often.

### What are the common causes of nocturia?

Nocturia can be part of many common medical conditions, such as:

- ⇒ heart problems
- ⇒ kidney problems
- ⇒ poorly controlled diabetes (Type 1 or Type 2)
- ⇒ swollen ankles
- ⇒ taking fluid tablets at night
- ⇒ bladder infections
- ⇒ an overactive bladder

⇒ constipation as a full bowel can press on the bladder

⇒ an enlarged prostate as this may not let the bladder empty out fully.

Other things that can lead to nocturia are:

- ⇒ being pregnant
- ⇒ changing your position from upright in the day to lying flat at night. This allows more blood to flow through the kidneys. This means more urine is made at night
- ⇒ having broken sleep as you may go to the toilet just because you are awake
- ⇒ consuming large amounts of fluid before going to bed at night
- ⇒ drinking alcohol or caffeine drinks before going to bed at night. Caffeine is found in coffee, chocolate and cola or sports drinks.

### If I reduce my fluid intake will it help?

Some people think if they cut down on how much fluid they drink through the day they may reduce nocturia. This is not correct.

Drinking too little can cause you to become dehydrated. Being dehydrated makes the urine more concentrated. This can upset the bladder and make you need to go to the toilet more often. Dehydration can also lead to constipation.

Avoid being dehydrated as it can also cause:

- ⇒ low blood pressure
- ⇒ lack of energy
- ⇒ more risk of falls as you get older especially at night.



## What should you do if you have nocturia?

You should talk to your doctor if you have regular nocturia. It may not be a simple health problem.

To find out more about your nocturia, your doctor may ask you about:

- ⇒ your past health
- ⇒ bladder problems
- ⇒ the medicines you take and what time you take them
- ⇒ if you have broken sleep.

Your doctor might also:

- ⇒ check if you have any of the common causes of nocturia
- ⇒ check if you have any of the common medical conditions listed earlier
- ⇒ test your urine for a bladder infection
- ⇒ ask you to keep a chart to check:
  - what, when and how much you drink
  - when and how much urine you pass
  - when you go to bed and get up.
- ⇒ arrange for urine and blood tests.

## How can nocturia be treated?

It is important to find the cause of nocturia. This allows the doctor to treat nocturia. The doctor can then refer you to the right specialist if needed.

Some treatments could be:

- ⇒ cutting back on how much caffeine and alcohol you drink, especially in the evening and before going to bed
- ⇒ reviewing the times you take fluid tablets
- ⇒ wearing support stockings for swollen ankles
- ⇒ resting with your legs up for a few hours in the afternoon or evening.

Other tips include:

- ⇒ lighting the path to the toilet
- ⇒ placing a commode or urinal to use next to your bed.

You may be referred to a nurse continence specialist or pelvic health physiotherapist. Your doctor may also refer you to a specialist. The specialist will discuss other treatments with you. These may include medicines which treat the nocturia or medicines to treat the cause of the problem.

You might be referred to a medical specialist such as a:

- ⇒ geriatrician
- ⇒ urogynaecologist
- ⇒ urologist
- ⇒ renal physician.

## Call the National Continence Helpline on 1800 33 00 66 (free call)

Speak with a nurse continence specialist for free and confidential advice on resources, details for local continence services, products and financial assistance.

## For more information, you can also visit:

[continence.org.au](http://continence.org.au)  
[toiletmap.gov.au](http://toiletmap.gov.au)  
[health.gov.au/bladder-bowel](http://health.gov.au/bladder-bowel)

*This fact sheet is intended as a general overview only and is not a substitute for professional assessment and care.*

*This fact sheet is available in other languages from [continence.org.au](http://continence.org.au)*



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