

TRANSCRIPT:

DR. HOLLY ATKINSON

Welcome to Healthination. I'm Dr. Holly Atkinson. Have you seen all of the advertisements for overactive bladder and wondered if some of your symptoms might be OAB? I sat down with Dr. Harris Foster, Professor of Surgery in the Division of Urology at the Yale University School of Medicine to talk about what overactive bladder is.

DR. HARRIS FOSTER

Overactive bladder is a condition. It primarily is a constellation of a variety of symptoms, urinary tract symptoms:

- Urinary frequency, primarily more than eight times per day;
- Urgency, that is, the inability to wait when the urge comes to get to the bathroom and sometimes;
- Urge incontinence, when you actually don't make it and there's a loss of urine, or incontinence.

Frequently, there is also a symptom that we call "nocturia," which means getting up at night to urinate, which is abnormal.

There are some differences in how one describes OAB. There's OAB, or Overactive Bladder Dry, that is, there's no incontinence. So, you just have frequency and urgency -- you're able to make it to the bathroom. And then there's what we call OAB Wet. Those are the patients that have urgency incontinence.

DR. HOLLY ATKINSON

So, who has OAB?

DR. HARRIS FOSTER

Almost anybody can have OAB, theoretically, children, particularly those that are bed wetters. But primarily it's a disease of aging. Some recent readings that I've seen estimate about 13 million Americans or, some have said one in six adults, in both the United States and Europe.

DR. HOLLY ATKINSON

Men? Women? What's the balance there?

DR. HARRIS FOSTER

Probably more women, but certainly it can happen in both genders or does happen in both genders.

DR. HOLLY ATKINSON

Does OAB run in families?

DR. HARRIS FOSTER

It's such a prevalent problem, and the causes are probably what we call multi-factorial. It may be that what we see as OAB is a combination of many different inputs ... but I'm not sure that at this point we can state that there is a genetic component.

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What should the typical patient expect to undergo in terms of a diagnosis?

DR. HARRIS FOSTER

OAB, given that it's a constellation of symptoms, can mimic other diseases. You have to rule out other potential causes before one gives that diagnosis, such as:

- Urinary tract infection
- Bladder cancer
- Bladder stones
- Neurologic causes, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease
- Obstruction of the bladder, such as in men with enlarged prostate, can give similar symptoms

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When you end up with a diagnosis of true OAB, does that mean we don't know what causes it?

DR. HARRIS FOSTER

Exactly. In the absence of some of the other diseases that are very definable and you have the symptoms of OAB, then the answer is that we don't know exactly what causes it and it may be a process of aging whereby the nerves are less active so that bladder function becomes abnormal, resulting in the symptoms that we see with OAB.

DR. HOLLY ATKINSON

So here's the insight. Overactive bladder is very common. Anyone can have the condition, but it does tend to affect older women the most. If you are experiencing symptoms and haven't been diagnosed, it's important to see a doctor to determine if you do have OAB or some other medical condition.