

# Sleep & The Nighttime Urge



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**W**henever we talk about sleeping difficulties, we often think of insomnia, obstructive sleep apnoea, and perhaps even snoring. One issue closely associated with the lack of sleep that many of us rarely take note of is nocturia.

Nocturia is the frequent need to get up, after one has fallen asleep, to go to the bathroom to urinate.<sup>1</sup> “Normally, we can accept waking up once to go. But once we get up more than once – perhaps twice or more – that will get in the way of having a good sleep,” says consultant urologist Dato' Dr Selvalingam Sothilingam.

## WHAT CAUSES NOCTURIA?

Nocturia is more commonly observed in men over 50, according to Dato' Dr Selvalingam. However, it can occur among people of any age, both male and female. There are many reasons why one can develop this condition, and it is possible that several factors may be present in someone who has nocturia.

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- BEHAVIOUR** > Drinking too much fluids (water, caffeine, alcohol), especially close to bedtime.<sup>2</sup> Stress can also be a factor.
  - POOR SLEEP HYGIENE** > If our bedroom environment is not conducive for good sleep (uncomfortable bed, too much noise, etc), we may have problems sleeping peacefully, and the body is compelled to go to the toilet as a result.
  - HEALTH ISSUES** > Nocturia can be caused by other existing health problems, such as nocturnal polyuria, heart problems, type 2 diabetes, overactive bladder and other bladder problems, and benign prostatic hyperplasia in men.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, it can be a side effect of taking certain medications.<sup>2</sup>

## NOCTURNAL POLYURIA

- Not the same thing as nocturia. Despite sharing some same alphabets in their names, nocturnal polyuria is actually a different condition altogether. It is a condition in which our body produces about 30% of our total daily urine volume at night. Hence, nocturnal polyuria can be one of the causes of nocturia, and it's a fairly common one.
- A hormone problem. There are many possible reasons why we can develop nocturnal polyuria. One of them, Dato' Dr Selvalingam shares, is decreased production of a hormone called arginine vasopressin (AVP) at night.<sup>2</sup> This causes the body to retain water at a lower rate, resulting in increased urine production at night and hence the increased urge to wake up and pee.<sup>2</sup>
- But it (and the nocturia it gives rise to) can be treated. To address this problem, the urologist can prescribe anti-diuretic medications to suppress the affected person's urine production at night.<sup>2</sup>



# Nocturia isn't Just About Interrupted Sleep

**S**ome people assume nocturia is a trivial problem, but Dato' Dr Selvalingam has seen many patients who found it very bothersome. Furthermore, there are some potential long-term consequences if the condition is left untreated.

## NIGHTTIME WOES

- Getting up frequently at night isn't just bothersome for us, it also interrupts our partner's sleep.
- Older people with nocturia face the risk of falls (especially when they are walking while still groggy!), and falls can be dangerous at their age.<sup>3</sup>

## DAYTIME TROUBLES

- Due to lack of sleep, we will have problems with concentrating and making rational decisions, giving rise to reduced work performance and increased sick leaves.<sup>4</sup>
- We may also become more at risk to traffic and workplace accidents due to daytime sleepiness.<sup>4</sup>

## A VICIOUS CYCLE

- Many people with nocturia experience difficulties going back to sleep, leading to greater impaired daytime function.<sup>4,5</sup>
- This sleep disruption or insomnia can also lead to increased medical illnesses and hospitalization.<sup>4,5</sup>
- Several studies speculate that people with nocturia face increased mortality or death rate, due to the link between nocturia and nocturnal polyuria as well as chronic conditions such as heart problems, diabetes, depression and sleep apnoea.<sup>4,5</sup>

## FORTUNATELY, NOCTURIA CAN BE TREATED!

Due to many possible factors contributing to nocturia, the patient will first undergo thorough medical examination. The patient will also be asked to keep a bladder diary to allow the urologist to get a more accurate understanding of the

patient's bladder habits, daily diet and other information that will allow for a more accurate identification of the possible cause(s).

Depending on the cause, treatment can be as simple as adjusting one's behaviour (such as reducing fluid intake), or it can involve managing the medical conditions that cause nocturia. What is important is that it can be treated.

Therefore, Dato' Dr Selvalingam advises us who are plagued by nocturia to see a doctor if it is bothering us. Not only will we be rid of the annoying urge to wake up and pee during the night, we may also discover that we have a medical condition that is causing the problem. Given the nature of chronic diseases, early detection allows for easier control and management.

Hence, we have everything to gain – better sleep, better state of mind and health – and nothing to lose by seeing a doctor about nocturia!

Visit [www.waketopee.ie](http://www.waketopee.ie) for more information on nocturia.

**References:** 1. Van Kerrebroeck, P., *et al.* (2002). The standardization of terminology in nocturia: report from the standardization subcommittee of the International Continence Society. *BJU International*;90:11–15. 2. Weiss J.P., Blaivas J.G. (2002). Nocturnal polyuria versus overactive bladder in nocturia. *Urology*;60(5 Suppl 1):28–32. 3. Beaupre, L.A., *et al.* (2005). Best practices for elderly hip fracture patients: a systematic overview of the evidence. *J Gen Intern Med.*; 20(11):1019–1025. 4. Ancoli-Israel, S., *et al.* (2011). The effect of nocturia on sleep. *Sleep Med Rev.*; 15(2): 91–97. 5. Oelke, M., *et al.* (2017). A practical approach to the management of nocturia. *Int J Clin Pract.*;71(11).

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