

# Consistently waking up at night to urinate?



**If you wake up consistently more than once a night to urinate, you may have a condition called **nocturia**.**<sup>1</sup> Nocturia is one of the most common causes of sleep disturbance but fortunately it is easy to diagnose and treat.

**If you are concerned that you may have nocturia, you should talk with your healthcare professional.**

# Nocturia



Many people – both men and women – may need to get up several times a night to urinate. This condition is called nocturia.

It becomes more common the older we get, and more than half of those who are aged over 50, get up to urinate at least once a night.<sup>2</sup> While this can be annoying, it may also have more serious effects, as by disturbing sleep, it can have a significant impact on your quality of sleep and quality of life.

*The information in this leaflet is provided to support, not replace a visit to the doctor. However, it may be a good starting point to better understand the problem and so help you to receive the right treatment.*

## Why we urinate

### The function of urine

The body is made up of 60% water, but during the day we lose a proportion of it by sweating, breathing out and by urinating. To compensate for this loss of liquids, it is important to drink.

How much we need to drink depends upon one's size and the activities we perform. An adult should drink roughly 2 litres of liquid a day (*depending on levels of physical activity*).



The reason why we urinate is that, amongst other things, we need to get rid of liquid the body doesn't need.



However, it is important that you do not reduce your normal liquid intake during the day.

## What can you do about nocturia?

If you're getting up at night to urinate and you're continually tired because of interrupted sleep, it's important to see your doctor. The problem may have a simple explanation and a simple solution. If the quantities of urine at night are larger than the bladder can store, it may be because you are producing too much urine or your bladder does not hold as much as it should. Many people believe that as we get older, the need to go to the toilet at night is unavoidable. A lot of men believe that this is caused by an enlarged prostate. However, nocturnal overproduction of urine is often caused by a deficiency of the hormone, vasopressin<sup>3</sup> that normally reduces urine production so that there is no need to get up during the night. A good start is to reduce your intake of alcohol and drinks that contain caffeine (*tea and coffee*). It is also a good idea not to eat or drink anything just before you go to bed.



The treatment your doctor chooses will naturally depend on the diagnosis you receive.



## What more can you do?

Your doctor is the person who is best qualified to help you. Do not hesitate to contact him or her. Your doctor can investigate, find the cause of your problem and provide a solution.

## Diagnosis

**It is important to remember that nocturia is a symptom of an underlying condition and your doctor will probably start by asking you some questions.**

You may then be given a voiding diary to fill in for a couple of days at home. This is to record how much you drink and how much you urinate. The voiding diary is a great help to doctors to establish the type of treatment they will prescribe. Sometimes, further examinations are carried out. In other cases, a treatment is recommended straightaway to see if it has a positive effect.

# Possible causes & treatment options



## Overproduction of urine at night

The body produces more of the hormone vasopressin that concentrates the urine at night, so we don't need to wake up to urinate. Normally, this nocturnal increase in hormone develops around the age of 5 to 6 (for some, it happens later). In children, if the hormone level is too low at night, it can result in bedwetting.

When vasopressin reduces urine production, the urine becomes more concentrated. If you do not produce enough vasopressin at night, the urine becomes diluted and there is not enough room in the bladder. You then have to get out of bed to urinate. This overproduction of urine at night is also called nocturnal polyuria.

## Overactive bladder

The feeling that you need to go to the toilet is due to special nerves that the body uses to inform the brain that the bladder is full. These signals can be misdirected or misinterpreted. The result can be an overactive bladder that frequently wants emptying. As a result, you will urinate frequently both day and night. In some cases, action needs to be taken.

There are medicines that relax the bladder and so reduce the feeling that you need to go to the toilet. It can also be treated with bladder training with a urotherapist or acupuncture.

## Enlarged prostate

Men have a gland (the size of a walnut) located below the bladder and surrounds the urethra. It is called the prostate and its task is to help produce semen.

As men become older, the prostate can start to enlarge, which causes it to press on the urethra, making it narrower. While a benign enlargement of the prostate is not life-threatening, it can cause problems with urinating resulting in disturbed sleep.



## Weakened bladder muscles

Muscles around the bladder help to empty urine from the bladder. If the muscles become weakened, it can cause a varying quantity of urine to remain in the bladder after urinating. If this happens, you soon have to go to the toilet again.

The muscles weaken with increasing age, but it can also be a symptom of a disease that you should discuss with your doctor. Diabetes and vitamin deficiency are examples.

## Cystitis

Cystitis often causes a frequent and acute feeling that you need to go to the toilet. People often experience a burning sensation when they urinate and it can cause incontinence. The doctor takes a urine sample to confirm if you have cystitis.

## Diabetes

Diabetes can be caused by excess weight but it can also be hereditary. The high sugar concentration in the blood absorbs the water, which leads to large quantities of urine. If you suspect you have diabetes, you should contact your doctor as soon as possible.

## Diuretics

Many diseases cause an imbalance between the fluids that should stay in and those that should leave the body. This can result in fluid retention in certain parts of the body and in some cases, diuretics are prescribed to treat the excess fluid. Diuretics make the kidneys secrete salt and water.

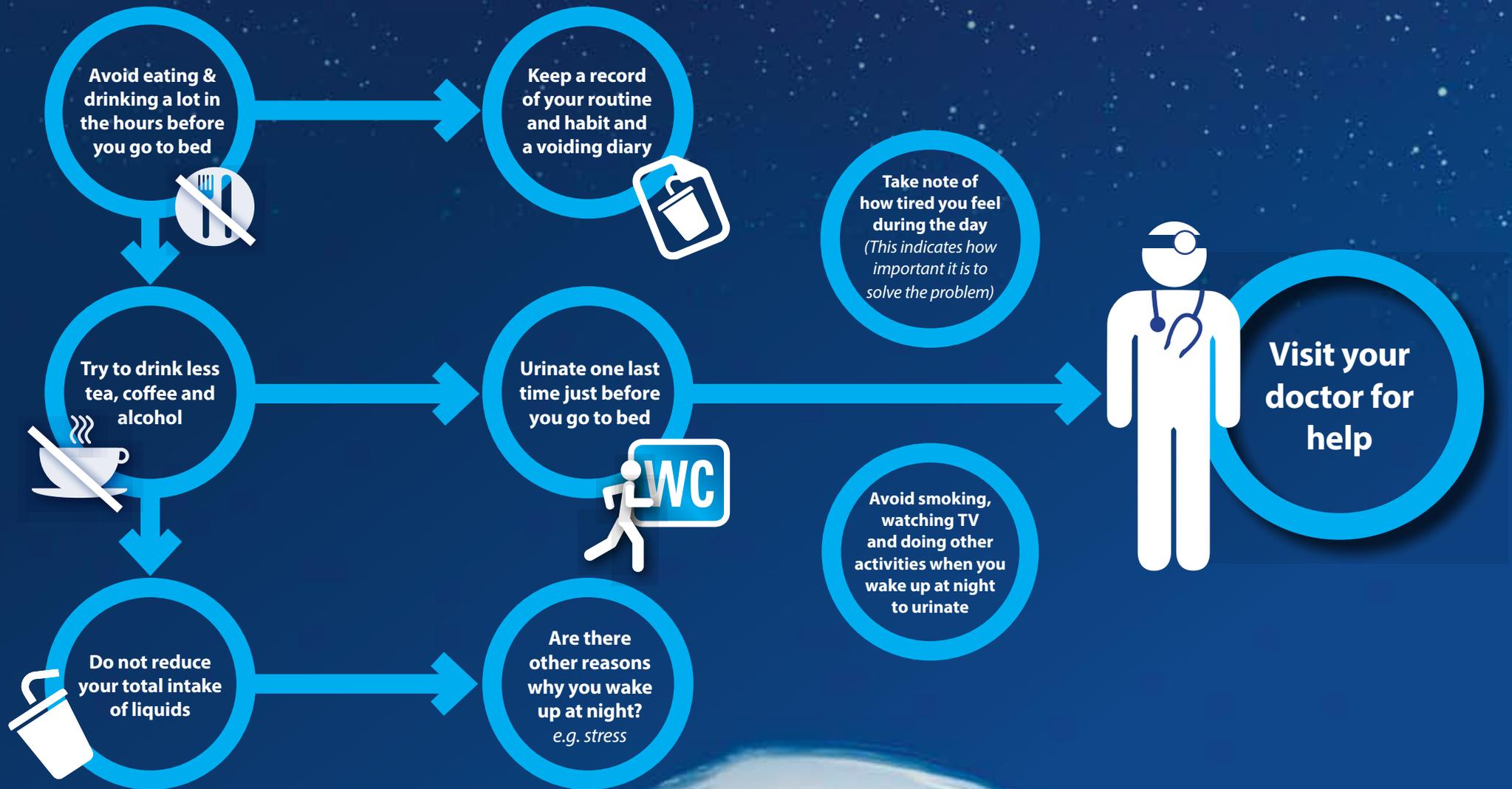
If the diuretics you are taking are causing nocturia, you should, together with your doctor, agree upon a better time for taking your medicine.



## Helpful tips and advice

If you need to get up to urinate several times a night, the most important advice is to consult your doctor. Otherwise, nocturia can lead to such a chronic lack of sleep that it can seriously affect how you feel and function.

*There may be an easy solution to the problem.*





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