

enCATHopedia Volume 5

DIABETES AND THE BLADDER

Diabetes (diabetes mellitus, DM)

Diabetes mellitus is a group of metabolic diseases in which a person has dangerously high blood sugar. This can be either because the body does not produce enough insulin, or because cells do not respond to the insulin that is produced.

Diabetes is classified into different types, depending on its symptoms and onset. Type 1 diabetes usually starts in children or young adults, and requires regular insulin injections to manage it. Type 2 diabetes is often attributed to, among other causes, lifestyle and diet, and may or may not require treatment with insulin, depending on the severity or progression of the disease. There are also other less common forms of diabetes.

Many of the disease's symptoms are common to all types, including nerve damage. As sensation and control via nerve pathways is essential to the urinary system, some people with diabetes may develop bladder problems.

How diabetes affects the bladder

People with diabetes may suffer peripheral nerve damage that decreases their ability to feel the bladder filling.

Because of the reduction in sensitivity, it becomes hard to sense when the bladder is ready to be emptied. Infrequent visits to the toilet can increase volumes, which are still not felt. This eventually weakens the contractility (elasticity) of the bladder, making it impossible to empty the bladder completely.

Incomplete emptying can lead to a number of bladder problems. It can cause retention (feeling like you have to go, but not being able to), incontinence (leakage from an over-full bladder), and infections from bacteria growing in the residual urine. If the bladder overfills, urine can also back up into the kidneys and cause serious injury.

Warning signs for diabetes-related bladder problems

The full or partial loss of sensation of the bladder filling makes it hard to notice there is an issue. This means it can go undiagnosed and untreated for a long time, compounding the problem. That is why it is important for people living with diabetes to understand the warning signs, and to seek medical attention as early as possible.

Some clues indicating a problem can include:

- Feeling the urge to void fewer than four times per day
- Straining to empty the bladder
- Sensation that the bladder is not totally emptied
- Experiencing recurrent urinary tract infections over the course of a year
- Any other bothersome symptoms in the urinary tract

Clean Intermittent Catheterization (CIC) can help

Self-catheterization with a disposable catheter (CIC) is a safe and convenient way to empty the bladder. It is effective for the types of problems encountered by many people living with diabetes.

- It's easy to learn, and most people find it becomes second nature very quickly
- It can be performed relatively quickly almost anywhere
- Catheters are discreet to carry and use
- It can be used as needed, in conjunction with natural voiding, i.e. to ensure voiding at regular intervals during the course of the day
- Because it empties the bladder completely, there's no risk of urine leaks or the build-up of urine that can flow back into the kidneys and damage them



Living with self-catheterization

Bladder problems can make it hard to go about our normal day-to-day lives with confidence. CIC can help in a lot of different ways.

With a hydrophilic, safe, single-use catheter, self-catheterization is quick, comfortable and discreet. Some people with bladder problems worry about going out in case there are leaks that get smelly. Self-catheterizing can be part of the solution.

Self-catheterization gives better control of when, where and how to empty the bladder. And self-catheterizing before going to bed helps empty the bladder completely, meaning fewer trips to the bathroom and a better night's sleep.

enCATHopedia is an information series addressing a range of subjects within urology. It is part of our commitment to improve quality of life for users and healthcare professionals worldwide.

Read more on bladder problems and solutions or listen to others sharing their stories at:

www.wellspect.com

At Wellspect we value the people behind our success as a leading provider of life-changing products for bowel and bladder management such as the well-known brands LoFric® and Navina™. From the thousands of users and healthcare professionals worldwide who inspire our innovative solutions, we know that working together is the best way to advance continence care, giving our users more time for life. Building on over 30 years of life-improving performance, we passionately strive to make a difference every day to everyone who needs our products and services.

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