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Living with OAB

The underlined terms are listed in the glossary.

Although overactive bladder symptoms (OAB) are not life-threatening, they usually have a negative impact on your quality of life. Different people cope differently with their symptoms and the possible side effects of treatment. Your personal preferences and values and the impact of OAB symptoms on your life should not be underestimated.

Quality of life involves both physical and psychological health. It is important not only to feel healthy but also to feel free from the psychological pressure of living with OAB symptoms.

Symptoms such as urgency or the need to urinate frequently are likely to have a negative effect on your quality of life. Someone with OAB symptoms often needs to locate toilets before leaving the house and may avoid certain activities altogether. Also, losing sleep because of waking up at night to urinate may

lower your energy levels, which makes it more difficult to maintain your daily activities. Episodes of urgency which result in leakage of urine are embarrassing and may lower your self-esteem.

These problems can also impact your loved ones. For example, your partner might be awoken by night-time toilet visits. Because of your OAB symptoms you may avoid social activities. This can also affect your partner's social life and lead to a feeling of isolation which prevents you and your loved ones from fully enjoying life.

There are many ways to keep the symptoms under control. They should not stop you from being happy in your relationships and participating in the social, cultural, and economic life of your community. Seek help if your symptoms bother you: consult your family doctor, general practitioner, or a urologist.

Seeking help

OAB symptoms become more common with increasing age. However, they should not be seen as a normal part of ageing or an untreatable problem. If you have bothersome symptoms it is important that you go to your doctor and are not embarrassed to discuss your situation.

Questions to ask your doctor

Although EAU Patient Information is relevant to most people with OAB symptoms, you may have questions which are specific to your individual situation. Your doctor is the person to answer these questions. It can be helpful to prepare a list of questions before you go see your doctor. Examples of questions you may want to ask are:

- Why have I developed this problem?
- What will happen in the next months and years if I choose not to have any treatment?
- What will happen in the next months and years if I do choose to have treatment?
- Which treatment option do you recommend for me?
- What can I expect from that treatment?
- What are the possible side effects or risks of this treatment?
- How long do I need to be treated for?

This information was updated in January 2014.

This leaflet is part of EAU Patient Information on OAB. It contains general information about overactive bladder symptoms. If you have any specific questions about your individual medical situation you should consult your doctor or other professional healthcare provider.

This information was produced by the European Association of Urology (EAU). The content of this leaflet is in line with the EAU Guidelines.

You can find this and other information on urological diseases at our website: <http://patients.uroweb.org>

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