

## Patient information factsheet

# Medications to help the symptoms of an overactive bladder

We have given you this factsheet because your consultant has recommended that you start taking antimuscarinic medication to help with your overactive bladder symptoms. We hope it will answer some of your questions, but if you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of the factsheet.

### Overactive bladder

Overactive bladder is a chronic condition. Symptoms include an urgent feeling that you need to go to the toilet, needing to pass urine frequently and sometimes leaking urine before you can get to the toilet. Although there isn't a cure for the condition, many people find that antimuscarinic medications can significantly improve their symptoms (by at least 70%).

### Antimuscarinic medications

Antimuscarinic medications aim to make symptoms of an overactive bladder more manageable. They work by reducing some of the impulses that pass from the bladder to the brain, reducing urinary urgency, frequency and leakage. These medications are usually given as tablets. You may need to try more than one of these medications before finding the one that controls your symptoms and suits you best.

The most commonly used antimuscarinic tablets are:

- solifenacin (Vesicare) 5 to 10mg
- fesoterodine (Toviaz®) 4 to 8mg
- trospium chloride (Regurin® XL) 60mg

Antimuscarinic medication should be taken once a day.

### Common side effects

Like all medications, antimuscarinic medication may cause side effects in some people, but many people will have no side effects at all. Side effects can include:

- **a dry mouth** (to help with this, try chewing on a piece of fruit, chewing gum, sucking on a sweet or a slice of lemon to stimulate your salivary glands)
- **constipation** (if you experience this, contact your GP or pharmacist for advice)
- **indigestion** (especially if you are already prone to it)
- **difficulty emptying your bladder** (if this happens, stop taking the medication and contact your GP for advice straight away)
- **tiredness or a lack of energy** (the medications can make you feel sleepy so we advise taking your dose in the evening)
- **blurred vision**
- **a fast heartbeat**

## Long-term effects

Antimuscarinic medications are a type of anticholinergic (drugs that stop involuntary muscle movements and various bodily functions). The long-term effects of taking these medications for an overactive bladder are unknown. However, it has been noted that older people can sometimes become confused after taking this type of medication.

## How to get your prescription

Your GP will be sent a letter with a list of recommended tablets for you to try. You will need to contact them to ask for a prescription. Your GP may leave this for you to collect at the surgery, or may ask you to make an appointment with them. Your GP will then support you through the process of trying out a couple of the different medications we have recommended.

## Taking the medication

If you have queries about any of the steps below, please speak to your GP.

- You should start with the first medication on the list at the lowest dose for at least four weeks. It can take up to four weeks for the medication to take effect and for you to notice any improvement in your symptoms.
- If this medication works well, without any side effects, then continue on this dose.
- If this medication doesn't work or if it only improves your symptoms a little, you may benefit from increasing the dose for a further four weeks. Contact your GP for advice first.
- If there is still no improvement in your symptoms then you might need to stop the medication and try a different one on the list.
- If you experience side effects that you're unable to cope with, you do not need to wait four weeks before changing your medication. Contact your GP who will be able to prescribe a different one.

## Follow-up appointment

Once you have had a chance to try one or more of the medications, we will arrange a follow-up appointment for you in our urogynaecology clinic.

## Alternative medications

Antimuscarinic medications are **not suitable for everyone**. People who have glaucoma, difficulty emptying their bladder, certain gastrointestinal or other medical conditions should **avoid** using them. If you think this might apply to you, please check with your GP.

Alternatives to antimuscarinic medications can be found below:

### Mirabegron (Betmiga) 50mg tablets

This medicine works in a slightly different way to antimuscarinic medication. It relaxes the bladder to increase the amount of urine your bladder can hold. We may offer this to you if the other medications are not suitable or are not working.

Common side effects of mirabegron tablets include:

- **a fast or irregular heartbeat**
- **urinary tract infection (UTI)**
- **increased blood pressure**

If you have liver or kidney problems, you may need a reduced dose. Contact your GP for advice.

## Oxybutynin (Kentera®) patches

If you experience side effects which you are unable to cope with, we might prescribe you oxybutynin (Kentera®) patches. These are an alternative treatment to tablets and work by giving you a continuous dose of medication which you absorb through your skin. This method reduces the amount of medication in your bloodstream.

## Frequently asked questions

### How long do I need to take the medication for?

- Once you have found a medication that suits you and is effective, you should stay on it long-term. Your GP will continue to prescribe it for you on a repeat prescription.
- You should see your GP every year (or every six months if you are over the age of 75) as recommended by the guidance issued by the National Institute of Clinical Excellence.
- If problems occur, your GP can refer you back to our urogynaecology clinic for further support.

### What happens if I stop the medication?

- If you forget to take or miss taking one or two tablets, this generally doesn't cause a severe recurrence in overactive bladder symptoms.
- If you completely stop taking the tablets, then the effects of the medication will gradually wear off and your overactive bladder symptoms will come back. If this happens, speak to your GP for advice.

## Contact us

If you have any further questions or concerns about your treatment, please contact us.

Urodynamics and physiotherapy department

Telephone: **023 8120 8967** (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm)

An answer machine is available outside of these hours.

## Useful links

### Bladder and Bowel Foundation

Offers advice and assistance over the phone from specially trained nurses.

Telephone: **0845 345 0165** (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 1pm)

Website: [www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org](http://www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org)

### National Association for Continence

Website: [www.nafc.org](http://www.nafc.org)

### NHS

Website: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/urinary-incontinence](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/urinary-incontinence)

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