

enCATHopedia Volume 2

MULTIPLE
SCLEROSIS
AND THE
BLADDER

Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

MS is an inflammatory disease that afflicts the central nervous system, the brain and the spinal cord. The isolating layer surrounding the nerves (myelin) is lost, leaving scar tissue called sclerosis (also known as plaques or lesions). These damaged areas slow down nerve impulses.

Urinary system control and function are often affected by this slowing of nerve signals. Over time, about 80 % of people living with MS experience bladder problems.

How MS affects the bladder

People living with MS can experience different kinds of bladder issues. One is if the nerve damage results in frequent, uncontrollable urges to empty the bladder even though the bladder is not full. This condition is termed overactive bladder (OAB).

Another issue is when the nerve lesions result in a lack of coordination during emptying, so that the bladder contracts against a closed bladder sphincter, trying to empty the bladder. This is called detrusor-sphincter dyssynergia and will cause incomplete emptying of the bladder and increased pressure in the bladder which may, if the bladder is not emptied regularly, lead to kidney damage.

Other conditions include weak contraction of the bladder musculature leading to incomplete emptying of the bladder. It is important to evacuate the urine in the bladder so that it will not cause a urinary tract infection or build up high pressure that can then affect the kidneys.

The importance of treating bladder problems consistently

For people with MS, it is particularly important to continue with prescribed bladder emptying treatments in the same way over time. The progression of the disease can swing wildly, making proper urination harder in some periods, and easier in others. But even a small amount of residual urine can lead to urinary tract infections. This in turn has been shown to potentially cause new attacks or the return of an attack that had previously receded.

Clean Intermittent Catheterization (CIC) can help

For people with enough dexterity to handle a catheter, self-catheterization with a disposable catheter (CIC) is a safe and convenient way to empty the bladder. It is effective whether the problem is an overactive bladder or retention.

- It's easy and safe, and while it may feel a little weird at first, it does not hurt
- It prevents residual urine, reducing the risk of urinary tract infections which reduces the risk of a new attack or recurrence of old one
- It empties the bladder completely, preventing the backflow of urine that could damage kidneys
- Because it empties completely, there's less risk of urine leakage

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

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