

## Bladder 'pacemaker' can fix overactive bladder, other voiding issues

April 29 2011, By Amanda Harper

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If your day is punctuated by urgent trips to the bathroom or trouble emptying your bladder, you might have a voiding dysfunction condition. The good news is that it can be easily treated.

UC Health urologist Ayman Mahdy, MD, says many people suffer silently with symptoms of overactive bladder (urge incontinence)—intense urgency, increased frequency or even urine leakage—because they are unaware the problem can be corrected.

"Voiding dysfunction problems can greatly impact a person's quality of life. Some may stop most of their daily activities, others may become socially isolated while still others have trouble functioning in their jobs because they have to run to the bathroom every 30 minutes or even less," explains Mahdy, who also serves as the director of voiding dysfunction, female urology and urodynamics at the University of Cincinnati (UC) College of Medicine.

Voiding dysfunction takes many forms and is more common with age or certain conditions. The problem affects both men and women.

In cases where conservative measures fail, Mahdy offers a convenient outpatient surgical treatment for patients with overactive bladder that has been shown to improve bladder function for patients with urgency, frequency and/or urge incontinence. The same procedure might also be indicated for other forms of voiding dysfunction such as urinary retention.

The procedure—called InterStim therapy— involves implantation of a small device that regulates the activity of the sacral nerve, which helps control bladder function. The procedure is approved by the Food and Drug Administration as a safe and effective means of restoring normal bladder function in patients who experience urgency, trouble emptying or holding urine. The procedure is also covered by insurance.

"InterStim therapy is like a pacemaker for the bladder," Mahdy explains. "Once implanted, it regulates the pelvic floor nerves responsible for bladder control, resulting in better function. The device measures about two inches and works automatically."

InterStim therapy can be used for patients who experience:

- Frequent urges to urinate ([overactive bladder](#))
- Inability to hold urine because of urgency
- Incomplete bladder emptying
- Trouble sleeping due to bladder control issues
- The need to use the bathroom more than seven times per day
- No to little control over their bladder
- Some cases of bladder pain

"The first step is to seek thorough evaluation with a [urologist](#) so that the underlying problem can be diagnosed and treated in the most effective way," adds Mahdy.

Provided by University of Cincinnati

Citation: Bladder 'pacemaker' can fix overactive bladder, other voiding issues (2011, April 29) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-04-bladder-pacemaker-overactive-voiding-issues.html>

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