

# Full bladder may get a third of women over 40 up at night

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Known as nocturia, condition can be benign or linked to more serious health issue, researchers note.

(HealthDay)—Many women have to get up more than once a night because of a full bladder, a new study finds.

Researchers found that of over 2,000 women aged 40 and up, one-third said they routinely got up at least twice a night to use the bathroom. Doctors refer to that as nocturia, and it can be a sign that you're drinking too much tea or coffee at night—or a signal of a serious [health condition](#).

"Traditionally, nocturia has been considered a part of other [urinary tract disorders](#)," said lead researcher Dr. Amy Hsu, a fellow at the San Francisco VA Medical Center.

But in this study, 40 percent of the women with nocturia reported no other [urinary tract symptoms](#), such as daytime overactive bladder or [urine leakage](#).

That suggests nocturia often cannot be attributed to those conditions, according to Hsu, who reports the findings in the January issue of *Obstetrics & Gynecology*.

Mary Townsend, a researcher at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, said nocturia is increasingly being recognized as a condition unto itself.

"And this study supports that view," said Townsend, who was not involved in the research.

Even if nocturia is a woman's only symptom, it can still be significant. "We know that nocturia can lead to lower sleep quality," Townsend said. "Poor sleep can negatively affect your mood or daytime functioning, including your productivity at work."

And for older women, she noted, getting up at night could lead to a fall and potentially serious injury.

Hsu's team found that, not surprisingly, nocturia was more common among relatively older women. For every five-year increase in age, a woman's risk rose by 21 percent. Nocturia was also more common among women who'd had a hysterectomy, hot flashes or had used vaginal estrogen to treat menopause symptoms.

Bladder problems are common after hysterectomy, and other studies have found a link to nocturia. As for hot flashes, they are notorious for keeping women up at [night](#)—which could be one reason for the connection to nocturia, according to Hsu.

On the other hand, relatively few women in the study were actually bothered by their nighttime trips to the bathroom. Only one-quarter said they were at least "moderately" bothered.

So is nocturia only an issue if it "bothers" you?

"That's a good question," Hsu said. "If it really doesn't bother you, and you're able to go right back to sleep, then it may not be a problem."

That's especially true, she noted, if you can attribute the nocturia to something benign—like drinking a lot of liquids close to bedtime.

However, Townsend said nocturia can be a symptom of certain health conditions that boost the body's urine production, like diabetes or heart failure. "So, there are still reasons to pay attention to nocturia, even if a woman isn't bothered by it," she said.

Nocturia can also affect people with certain conditions that disrupt sleep, Townsend said—including sleep apnea and restless legs syndrome.

"So women with nocturia—especially those whose symptoms are affecting their mood or ability to function during the day—should be encouraged to talk to their health care provider," Townsend said.

Treatment for nocturia might include tackling the underlying cause—such as untreated diabetes—or simple lifestyle changes. And if necessary, Hsu said, there are medications that can help regulate urine production or calm an overactive bladder.

"I think [women](#) should be aware that this condition is common, and not something to be embarrassed about," Hsu said. "You're not alone."

Two of Hsu's co-authors on the study have received research funding

from companies that make drugs for urinary tract disorders.

**More information:** The Bladder and Bowel Foundation has more on [nocturia](#).

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