For older men, urinary symptoms may affect mortality risk, even if not 'bothersome'

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Finnish men who were 50, 60, or 70 years old when enrolled in the study in 1994. The new analysis included data on 1,167 men who were followed up through the end of 2018. About half of the men died during this 24-year follow-up period.

Lower urinary tract symptoms were analyzed as a risk factor for death during follow-up, with adjustment for age and other accompanying medical conditions (comorbidity). The analysis accounted for the possible interaction between symptoms and bothersomeness. For urologists, symptom "bother" is an important consideration: men who say their urinary symptoms don't bother them very much are considered to be successfully coping with their symptoms, and thus do not require treatment.

Data analysis showed several significant associations between male urinary tract symptoms and long-term mortality risk. Findings included a 20% increased risk of death among men with moderate to severe bladder emptying or "voiding" symptoms (such as hesitancy, weak stream, or straining). There was also a 40% increase in men with "storage" symptoms (such as frequent daytime urination, nocturia, or various types of incontinence).

Analysis including mild urinary symptoms found no increase in mortality risk. "For clinicians, the analyses show that moderate and severe male LUTS in general are good indicators of poor health whereas mild LUTS can be considered as a normal part of healthy aging," according to the authors.

However, there were some notable exceptions: mortality risk was increased by 30% among men with daytime frequency and 50% for those with nocturia, regardless of symptom severity. Dr. Åkerla and colleagues write that "this suggests considering daytime voiding interval of three or less hours and any nighttime voiding as patient-important, especially when appearing as persistent..."
symptoms."

In addition, the risk of death was more than
doubled among men with frequent urinary
incontinence. This "particularly strong" association
suggested that urinary urgency has a significant
impact on health and functional status in aging
men—possibly reflecting the effects of long-term
neurological and vascular disease.

The link between male urinary symptoms and
mortality also raises questions about symptom
bothersomeness in making treatment decisions. Dr.
Åkerla and colleagues conclude that "the lack of
association between symptom bother and mortality
possibly reinforces the very subjective nature of
bother as a construct compared to more objectively
measured symptom severity."

**More information:** Jonne Åkerla et al, Lower
Urinary Tract Symptoms and Mortality among
Finnish Men: The Roles of Symptom Severity and

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