Bladder Dysfunction in Parkinson’s Disease

One third of people experience a bladder-related problem with PD. The most common problem is an overly active (hyperactive) bladder. A hyperactive bladder can cause you to:
- rush to the bathroom (or you would be unable to hold it in)
- urinate frequently (less than every two hours)
- get up multiple times at night to go to the bathroom

With PD, you may also experience an underactive (hypoactive) bladder. This condition is much LESS common than a hyperactive bladder. Symptoms include:
- difficulty starting urination
- a sensation of not completely emptying your bladder
- leakage of urine

Urinating more frequently can also appear with prostate problems. This is a condition that affects men. Usually men with prostate problems also notice that the urine stream is slow or hesitant. If you are seeing a urologist for your bladder problem, make sure he/she is aware that you have Parkinson’s disease, because PD may provide an alternate explanation for the urinary problem. Urinary problems related to PD would not improve with surgical operations on the prostate.

Why does it happen?

Hyperactive bladder is related to numerous areas of degeneration in PD, including the nerve cells that control the bladder directly, the motor areas affected in PD, and sometimes the higher-level control of urination, in the brain.

What are possible treatments?

If you are having trouble with hyperactive bladder, try to schedule bathroom trips at regular intervals, especially if you know a bathroom may not be close by.

There are several options that decrease the urgency and frequency to urinate. Sometimes the medications for the motor symptoms of Parkinson’s can help the bladder problem. Your doctor may also suggest anticholinergic medications (Oxybutynin, Tolteridone) or trospium chloride (Trosec). If you have memory problems or hallucinations and your doctor has prescribed you an ‘anti-cholinergic’ medication, there is a chance that these medications can make these symptoms worse. If so, stop these immediately and speak with your doctor. Desmopressin, a nasal spray, is often recommended for nighttime urination. This drug reduces the formation of urine. A rare but dangerous side effect of this drug is low salt levels in the blood. If you start taking this drug, you will need routine blood tests.
Sources: