

## CLINICAL REVIEW

# Non-Surgical Management of Urinary Incontinence

Ranna Al-Dossari, DO, Monica Kalra, DO, Julie Adkison, PharmD, and Bich-May Nguyen, MD, MPH

Urinary incontinence management varies depending on the type of incontinence and severity of symptoms. Types of incontinence include stress (SUI), urge or overactive bladder (OAB), mixed, neurogenic, and overflow incontinence. First-line treatment for OAB and SUI is nonpharmacologic management. Behavioral therapy is first-line treatment for urge incontinence. Vaginal mechanical devices (cones, pessaries, and urethral plugs), pelvic floor muscle training, and electroacupuncture are recommended as first-line treatment for women with SUI. Biofeedback and electric muscle stimulation can be adjunctive therapy for SUI. Antimuscarinics and  $\beta$ -3 agonists can be used as adjective therapy for those with OAB who do not improve with behavioral therapy.  $\beta$ -3 agonists have less anticholinergic side effects compared with antimuscarinics for OAB. Adverse medication effects can often lead to discontinuation due to poor tolerability. Third-line therapies are for those who fail conservative and pharmacologic therapies and lack high-grade evidence. Neuromodulation, neurotoxin injections, vaginal laser therapy, and acupuncture are third-line in OAB management. Pharmacologic management with  $\alpha$ -1-blockers is recommended as first-line treatment for moderate to severe overflow incontinence from BPH. 5- $\alpha$  reductase inhibitors can be used as an adjunct medication in those with refractory overflow incontinence symptoms and a PSA  $\geq$  1.5 mg/dL. Clean intermittent catheterization is first-line therapy for neurogenic bladder but can increase risk of catheter-associated urinary tract infection. Clinicians should assess type of incontinence, patient goals, side effect profile, and tolerability to determine an individualized treatment plan for each patient. (J Am Board Fam Med 2024;37:909–918.)

**Keywords:** Family Medicine, Overactive bladder, Stress Urinary Incontinence, Urge Urinary Incontinence, Urinary Incontinence

## Practice Recommendations

- Behavioral therapy is first-line treatment for urge incontinence (SOR B)
- Pelvic floor muscle training (PFMT) is recommended as first-line treatment for women with stress or mixed urinary incontinence, but there is no consensus about the most effective PFMT intervention due to heterogeneous data (SOR A)
- $\alpha$ -1-blocker therapy is first-line therapy for overflow incontinence due to benign prostatic

hyperplasia (BPH) (SOR A) followed by 5- $\alpha$  reductase inhibitors (SOR B)

- Clean intermittent catheterization (CIC) is first-line therapy for neurogenic bladder, but can increase risk of catheter-associated urinary tract infection (CAUTI) (SOR C)

## Introduction

Urinary incontinence affects about 13 million adults in the United States and is often underreported due to the disconcerting nature of symptoms.<sup>1</sup> Types of incontinence include stress (SUI), urge or overactive bladder (OAB), mixed, neurogenic, and overflow incontinence. See Table 1 for definitions. The prevalence of urinary incontinence varies with SUI affecting up to 45% of women over 30 years old, urge incontinence affecting 9% in women 40 to 44 years; 31% in women over 75 years, and 42% in men over 75 years.<sup>1</sup> Mixed incontinence affects 20 to 30% of those with chronic incontinence, and overflow incontinence affects 5% of those with chronic incontinence.<sup>1</sup> This article will focus on management of

This article was externally peer reviewed.

Submitted 15 December 2023; revised 28 March 2024; accepted 1 April 2024.

From the Memorial Family Medicine Residency, Sugar Land, TX (RAD); Memorial Family Medicine Residency, Sugar Land, TX (MK); Memorial Family Medicine Residency, Sugar Land, TX (JA); Department of Health Systems and Population Health Sciences, University of Houston Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine, Houston, TX (BMN).

Funding: None.

Conflict of interest: Dr. Nguyen owns equity in Abbvie. The other authors have no conflicts of interest.

Corresponding author: Ranna Al-Dossari, DO, 14023 Southwest Fwy, Sugar Land, TX 77478 (E-mail: Ranna.al-dossari@memorialhermann.org).

**Table 1. Types of Incontinence**

Type of Incontinence	Definition
Stress Incontinence	Weakness in the urethral sphincter and/or pelvic floor causes involuntary leakage of urine when there are increases in intra-abdominal pressure (e.g., with exertion, coughing, sneezing). <sup>1</sup>
Urge Incontinence	Detrusor overactivity causes urinary urgency. <sup>1</sup>
Mixed Incontinence	Combination of stress and urge incontinence. <sup>1</sup>
Overflow Incontinence	Overdistended bladder due to impaired detrusor contractility and/or bladder outlet obstruction causes involuntary leakage of urine. <sup>1</sup>
Neurogenic Incontinence	Impaired function of either the bladder, bladder neck, and/or its sphincters related to brain, spinal cord, or nerve problem. <sup>24</sup>

different types of urinary incontinence through non-operative therapies (Figure 1).

### Nonpharmacologic Management for OAB

Nonpharmacologic therapies can be beneficial for OAB as first-line or adjunctive therapy or for those who develop adverse effects with drugs.

#### Behavioral Therapies

As first-line or adjunctive therapy in management of OAB and SUI, behavioral therapies include fluid restriction (reduction by 25%), decreased caffeine intake, bladder-sphincter biofeedback (BF), bladder training, and pelvic floor muscle training (PFMT). Weight loss of 8% in obese women reduced UI episodes by 47% vs 28% in control groups.<sup>2</sup> Per American Urologic Association (AUA) guidelines, behavioral therapy should be offered to all patients with OAB.<sup>2</sup> After 6 weeks, behavioral therapy alone reduced incontinence episodes per week by 52.9% (from 6.8 to 3.1 episodes), compared with 78.8% (from 6.5 to 1.5 episodes) with behavioral and drug therapy.<sup>3</sup> The mean voiding frequencies were lower for behavioral therapy alone compared with drug therapy alone ( $P < .001$ ).<sup>3</sup>

#### Neurotoxin Injections

A third-line therapy available for urge incontinence is neurotoxin intradetrusor muscle injections such as onabotulinumtoxinA (BTX-A).<sup>4</sup> BTX-A injections

reduces anticholinergic use by over 50% 3 months postinjection.<sup>4</sup> The efficacy following the first injection persists across multiple treatment cycles.<sup>5</sup> There was a 33% reduction in the number of voids per day for those who had >11 voids per day [80% of those participants decreased to 1 to 7 voids per day] ( $P < .001$ ), a 23% reduction in nocturia ( $P < .001$ ), and the total dry rate increased from 20% to 60% ( $P = .04$ ) at 3 months after BTX-A.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately many of the studies available do not compare with placebo group. Adverse effects are in Table 2.

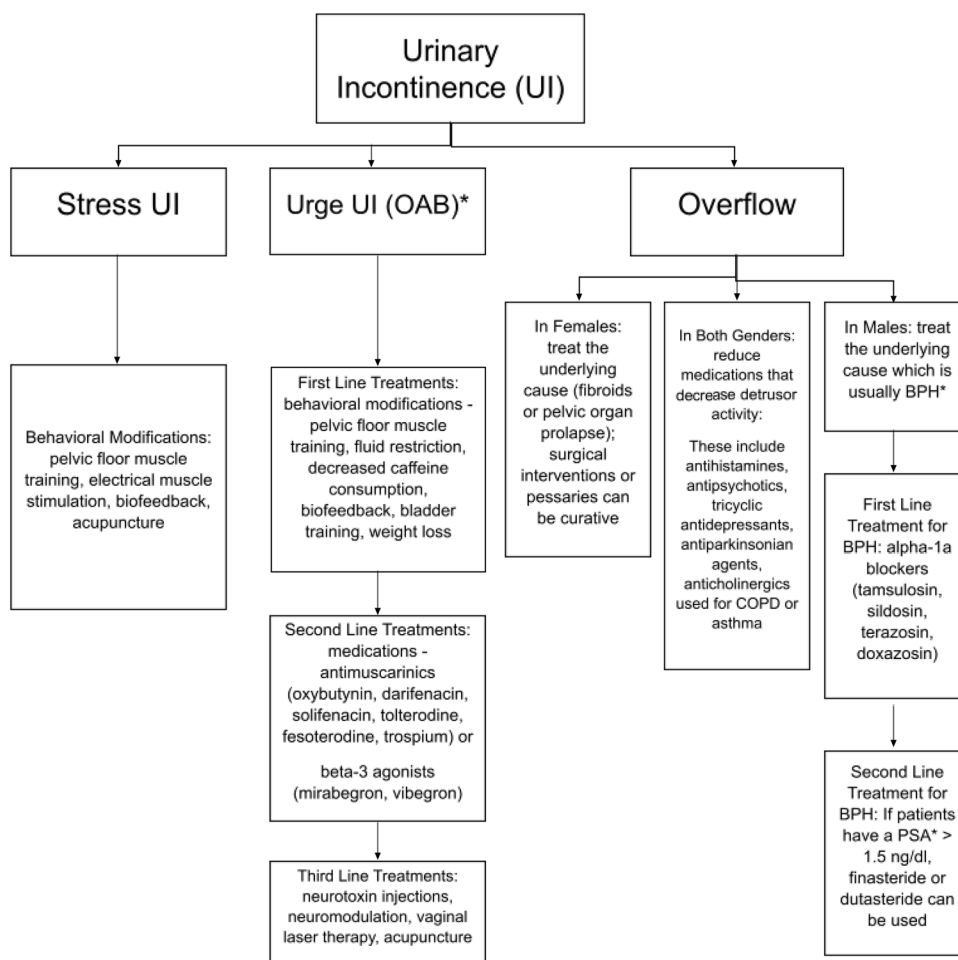
#### Neuromodulation

If OAB is unresponsive to first- and second-line therapies, neuromodulation techniques like percutaneous sacral nerve stimulation (PSNM) and percutaneous posterior tibial nerve stimulation (PTNS) can be used. PSNM involves a permanent implantable lead at S3 nerve transmitting electric stimulation to control the bladder and pelvic floor muscles.<sup>6</sup> When comparing PSNM versus medications, up to 56% of participants achieved continence and 88% had improvement in OAB symptoms.<sup>6</sup> PTNS implants an electrode above the medial malleolus activating the tibial nerve over twelve weekly 30-minute sessions.<sup>6</sup> PTNS has comparable therapeutic effects with antimuscarinic agents on improvement of OAB symptoms with fewer incidence of adverse effects and less discontinuation than antimuscarinic agents.<sup>7</sup> However, some studies show no difference in incontinence and urgency episodes between PTNS and placebo groups.<sup>6</sup> Adverse events are in Table 2.

#### Vaginal Laser Therapy

A third-line option for OAB in women is vaginal laser therapy (common lasers include CO2 and Er:YAG lasers). However, it is unclear how promoting vaginal epithelium thickness and collagen remodeling improves OAB symptoms and lacks high-quality supporting evidence.<sup>8</sup> About 60% of patients treated with Er:YAG vaginal laser therapy were satisfied and reported an improvement in OAB over 3 months, but results were not sustained at 12 months.<sup>8</sup> A 2023 systematic review and meta-analysis on CO2 laser therapy, suggests that the therapy results in changes in questionnaires and distress scores; not much focus on improvement in number of voids.<sup>9</sup>

Figure 1. Flowchart of types of urinary incontinence and corresponding treatments.



**Notes:** \*OAB: overactive bladder, BPH: benign prostatic hyperplasia, PSA: prostate specific antigen. References 2-24 were used to create this figure.

### Acupuncture

For OAB, there is a lack of supportive evidence between true and sham acupuncture.<sup>10</sup>

## Urge Incontinence and Overactive Bladder

### Pharmacotherapy for OAB

When first-line options do not adequately address OAB symptoms, pharmacotherapy is the next step. First, identify patient medications which may contribute to OAB and modify where appropriate.

### Antimuscarinics

Antimuscarinics reduce OAB symptoms by inhibiting involuntary bladder contractions and relaxing detrusor smooth muscle. Medications include oxybutynin, darifenacin, solifenacin, tolterodine, fesoterodine, and

trospium. Systematic reviews have concluded there is similar efficacy among agents in reduction of symptoms.<sup>2</sup> A recent Cochrane review found that anticholinergic drugs probably lead to a slight reduction in the number of micturitions per 24 hours compared with placebo (MD 0.85, 95% CI 0.98 to 0.73;  $P < .00001$ ) and most likely lead to a slight reduction in urgency episodes per 24 hours at the end of treatment compared with placebo (MD 0.85, 95% CI 1.03 to 0.67;  $P < .00001$ ).<sup>11</sup> Medication selection should account for patient preference, adverse effect history, comorbidities, route of administration, and cost.

Side effects are noted in Table 2. Lack of tolerability is one of the most common reasons for discontinuation and persistence rates at 1 year range from 15 to 25%.<sup>12</sup> Longer-acting once-daily formulations are less likely to cause severe adverse effects. Topical

**Table 2. Management Options for Urinary Incontinence**

Treatment Modality	Type of Incontinence for Directed Therapy	1st, 2nd, or 3rd Line Therapy	Adverse Effects	NNT	SOR
Behavioral therapy (fluid restriction, bladder-sphincter biofeedback, bladder training and pelvic floor muscle exercises)	Urge, Stress, and Mixed	1st line	No major side effects were reported. <sup>2</sup>	NNT = 3, for >75% reduction in frequency of incontinence after 8 weeks of treatment. <sup>32</sup>	B
Neurotoxin injections	Urge	3rd line	Urinary retention requiring clean intermittent self-catheterization (6.5% rate) and urinary tract infection (25.5% compared to 9.6% with placebo). <sup>5</sup>	Limited published randomized controlled trials did not report adequate data to calculate NNT.	B
Neuromodulation (PSNM, PTNS)	Urge	3rd line	Adverse events of PSNM include pain at the stimulator and lead sites (8.5 to 42%), <sup>6</sup> lead migration (3.4 to 19%) <sup>6</sup> , infection (3.5-5%) <sup>6</sup> , and surgical revision with high reintervention rates at a median of 33.2%. <sup>33</sup> Adverse effects of PTNS include discomfort and pain at stimulation site (2 to 17%) <sup>6</sup> , tingling, and swelling of the leg. <sup>33</sup> Vaginal discharge (10%) or spotting (6.7%) lasting a few days. <sup>35</sup>	NNT = 2 for PTNS to achieve >50% reduction of incontinence episodes. <sup>34</sup>	B
Vaginal laser therapy	Urge	3rd line	Rare side effects reported. <sup>10</sup>	NNT = 4 for objective cure at 12 months after CO2 vaginal laser. <sup>36</sup>	B
Acupuncture (for urge incontinence)	Urge	3rd line	Anticholinergic side effects such as dry mouth (7 to 34%) <sup>37</sup> , constipation (2 to 19%) <sup>37</sup> , blurred vision (2 to 5%) <sup>37</sup> , dyspepsia (1 to 8%) <sup>37</sup> , urinary retention (6%) <sup>13</sup> , and impaired cognitive function. <sup>15</sup> Tolerability is one of the most common reasons for discontinuation, and persistence rates at one year range from 15 to 25%. <sup>12</sup> Longer-acting once-daily formulations are less likely to cause severe adverse effects. <sup>13</sup> Topical oxybutynin patch or gel have a lower incidence of dry mouth and constipation. <sup>13</sup>	Limited published randomized controlled trials did not report adequate data to calculate NNT.	B
Antimuscarinics (oxybutynin, darifenacin, solifenacin, tolterodine, fesoterodine, and trospium)	Urge	2nd line	Mirabegron may cause dose-dependent blood pressure changes and tachycardia. <sup>38</sup> Vibegron does not produce the same blood pressure elevation, but direct comparisons of the two drugs are unavailable. <sup>39</sup> Mirabegron should be used with caution in patients with severe or uncontrolled hypertension. <sup>38</sup> Both drugs can cause xerostomia, constipation, and UTI in less than 6% patients. <sup>38,39</sup>	NNT = 10 with tolterodine to achieve 75% reduction of urge incontinence episodes at 12 weeks. <sup>15</sup>	B
Beta-3 agonists (Mirabegron and Vibegron)	Urge	2nd line		NNT = 7 with vibegron to achieve 75% reduction of urge incontinence episodes at 12 weeks. <sup>15</sup>	B

*Continued*

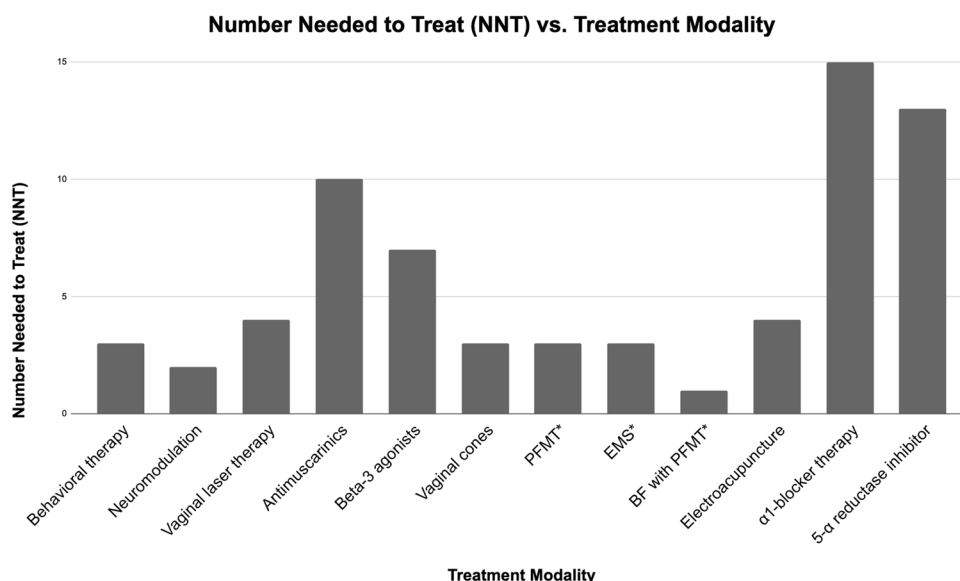
Table 2. Continued

Treatment Modality	Type of Incontinence for Directed Therapy	1st, 2nd, or 3rd Line Therapy	Adverse Effects	NNT	SOR
Vaginal cones, pessaries, and urethral plugs	Stress (from POP)	1st line	The common complications were extrusion of the pessary, bleeding, pain, or vaginal discharge, but these conditions could be easily solved after topical antibiotics, vaginal estrogencream, or discontinuation of pessary for a few days. <sup>19</sup>	NNT = 3 for vaginal cones to achieve a negative pad test after 6 months of therapy. <sup>40</sup> Limited published randomized controlled trials on pessaries did not report whether symptoms were resolved so NNT could not be calculated.	B
Pelvic Floor Muscle Training (PFMT)	Stress or Mixed	1st line	No major side effects reported.	NNT = 3 for PFMT to achieve a negative pad test after 6 months of therapy. <sup>40</sup>	A
Electrical Muscle Stimulation (EMS)	Stress	Adjunct	No major side effects reported.	NNT = 3 for EMS to achieve a negative pad test after 6 months of therapy. <sup>40</sup>	A
Biofeedback (BF) with PFMT	Stress	Adjunct	No major side effects reported.	NNT = 1 for PFMT with BF to achieve a pad test of 1 g or less 8 weeks after treatment. <sup>41</sup>	A
Electroacupuncture	Stress	1st line	No major side effects reported.	NNT = 4 reporting 50% or greater recovery at 6 weeks. <sup>42</sup>	A
Alpha-1-blocker therapy (tamsulosin, silodosin, terazosin, doxazosin, alfuzosin)	Overflow	1st line	Orthostatic hypotension (6%), ejaculatory dysfunction (4%). <sup>43</sup> Alfuzosin has a lower incidence of ejaculatory dysfunction. <sup>25</sup>	NNT = 15 to lower urinary tract symptoms over 4 years. <sup>44</sup>	A
5-alpha reductase inhibitor (finasteride, dutasteride)	Overflow	2nd line	Reduction of PSA by 50% after three months of use. <sup>25</sup>	NNT = 13 to prevent one case of urinary retention and/or surgical treatment of BPH with alpha blocker plus 5-alpha reductase inhibitor combo therapy. <sup>45</sup>	B
Clean Intermittent Catheterization	Neurogenic bladder	1st line	CAUTI. Hydrophilic pre-lubricated single-use catheters are less likely to cause CAUTI compared to standard polyvinyl chloride multi-use catheters. <sup>30</sup>	Limited published randomized controlled trials did not report adequate data to calculate NNT.	C

Strength of Recommendation Level of Evidence is based on Strength of Recommendation Taxonomy (SORT).

NNTs reported were calculated by the authors based on data provided in the articles referenced.

*Abbreviations:* NNT, Number Needed to Treat; PSNM, Percutaneous Sacral Nerve Modulation; PTNS, Percutaneous Tibial Nerve Stimulation; CO<sub>2</sub>, Carbon Dioxide; UTL, Urinary Tract Infection; POP, Pelvic Organ Prolapse; PFMT, Pelvic Floor Muscle Training; EMS, Electrical Muscle Stimulation; BF, Biofeedback; PSA, Prostate-Specific Antigen; BPH, Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia; CAUTI, Catheter Associated Urinary Tract Infection.

**Figure 2. Treatment modalities and numbers needed to treat.**

**Notes:** Figure includes NNTs that authors were able to calculate. Refer to Table 2 for explanation of different definitions of symptom improvement. \* PFMT, Pelvic Floor Muscle Training, EMS, Electrical Muscle Stimulation, BF, Biofeedback.

oxybutynin formulations have a lower incidence of dry mouth and constipation.<sup>13</sup> Although efficacy across various formulations is similar, affinity for muscarinic receptors, and therefore side effect profiles, differ among agents. For patients experiencing an inadequate response or intolerable side effects, switching to a different agent may be beneficial.

Of note, antimuscarinics are on the Beers list for older adults with dementia, cognitive impairment, delirium, or high risk of delirium. The total anticholinergic load should be assessed when considering long-term use of antimuscarinics in this population.

### ***β-3 Agonists***

β-3-agonists relax the detrusor smooth muscle during the bladder fill-void cycle and increase bladder capacity to relieve OAB symptoms. The primary advantage of β-3 agonists is avoiding anticholinergic side effects. The two available agents are mirabegron and vibegron (new agent released in 2020) which may take up to 8 weeks for therapeutic impact. Comparative studies have shown β-3-agonists to be as efficacious as antimuscarinics in symptom reduction and have better 12 month adherence.<sup>14</sup> In a trial examining 75% reduction of urge incontinence episodes at 12 weeks, the endpoint was achieved in 52%

of the vibegron group (NNT = 7), 48% in the tolterodine group (NNT = 10), and 37% in the placebo group ( $P < .0001$ ).<sup>15</sup> A recent 2023 randomized control trial showed both mirabegron at 50 mg and vibegron at 50 mg improved OAB symptoms and the parameters of voiding diary equally in postmenopausal women with treatment naïve OAB.<sup>16</sup> See side effects in Table 2 and NNT in Figure 2.

### ***Combination Therapy***

Combining an anticholinergic drug and a β-3 agonist may be considered when individual agents lack efficacy or if increased antimuscarinic doses are intolerable. Solifenacin 5 mg plus mirabegron 25 mg or 50 mg was significantly better than monotherapy in decreasing episodes of urinary incontinence, urgency and nocturia in a 24-hour period after 12 weeks of continuous therapy.<sup>17</sup>

### ***Stress Urinary Incontinence***

#### ***Mechanical Devices***

Mechanical devices such as vaginal cones, pessaries, and urethral plugs may be effective in patients with symptomatic pelvic organ prolapse (POP) and those who may not be surgical candidates.<sup>18</sup> However, poor long-term adherence at 2 years may be associated with women with SUI after reduction (1-hour pad test > 10

g vs  $\leq 10$  g, 57.1% vs 84.3%,  $P = .027$ ) or age under 60 (age  $\leq 60$ -year-old vs  $> 60$ -year-old, 58.3% vs 83.0%,  $P = .04$ ).<sup>19</sup> No adverse effects were noted.

### **Pelvic Floor Muscle Training**

The recommended first-line treatment for women with SUI or mixed urinary incontinence is PFMT, composed of exercises to improve strength, endurance and/or relaxation.<sup>19</sup> While there is not consensus about the most effective intervention for SUI due to the heterogeneity of studies and lack of large RCTs, PFMT programs generally include 6 to 20 repetitions of phasic contractions of 1 to 5 seconds, followed by relaxation time equal to or twice as long, performed 2 to 3 times weekly.<sup>20</sup> After PFMT, the median 1-hour pad test decreased by 17.8 g ( $P < .001$ ) and median social activity index (scale from 0 = cannot undertake any social activity to 10 = does not have any problem) increased from 4.5 to 7.5 ( $P < .001$ ).<sup>20</sup> No adverse effects were noted. A 2022 Cochrane systematic review reported PMFT is more effective than control at achieving cure and improving symptoms and quality-of-life measures in women with all types of urinary incontinence. PFMT for all types of urinary incontinence is more effective if it is more intense, done more frequently, and performed with individual supervision.<sup>21</sup>

### **Electric Muscle Stimulation**

With electric muscle stimulation (EMS), electric impulses are applied directly to the striated pelvic floor muscle (PFM). While the mechanism of action is unknown, it is theorized that intravaginal EMS stimulates the efferent motor fibers of the pudendal nerve, facilitating PFM contraction, leading to muscle hypertrophy and increased urethral pressure.<sup>20</sup> After PFMT with estriol therapy and EMS, postmenopausal women reported a 59% decrease in SUI symptoms compared with 10% decrease with estriol alone ( $P < .01$ ).<sup>20</sup> This intervention may be an effective adjunct therapy for women who cannot actively contract PFM. Electric stimulation is more beneficial than control at achieving cure or improving symptoms in patients with stress urinary incontinence and improving symptoms in women with urge urinary incontinence.<sup>21</sup>

### **Biofeedback**

Another adjunct therapy to PFMT is BF, a training through isolated or associated contractions in which information about an unconscious physiologic

process becomes clear through auditory or visual signals that can then be modified.<sup>20</sup> There are two types of BF: the manometric which captures pressure and the surface electromyographic which captures electric activity.<sup>20</sup> In the manometric type, a perineometer measures the ability of pelvic floor muscles to develop vaginal tightness. Because increases in vaginal pressure can be due to abdominal muscle contraction, the perineometer measures the muscle function of the pelvic floor.<sup>20</sup> After BF training in combination with PFMT, the median 1-hour pad test decreased by 19.3 g ( $P < .001$ ) and median social activity index increased from 3.5 to 8.1 ( $P < .001$ ).<sup>20</sup>

### **Acupuncture**

Available evidence supports acupuncture and electroacupuncture (EA) for SUI. Acupuncture reduced urine leakage in pad 2.67 (95% CI, 4.05 to 1.29) and the validated International Consultation on Incontinence Questionnaire – Short Form (ICIQ-SF) score 3.46 (95% CI, 3.69 to 3.22).<sup>22</sup> EA involves electric stimulation through acupuncture needles. A meta-analysis of two moderate-grade-quality studies involving 553 women with SUI demonstrated that the EA group reported a  $\geq 50\%$  reduction in UI episodes than in the sham group during the 27 to 30-week follow-up period (RR 1.73 [95% CI 1.46 to 2.04];  $P < .00001$ ).<sup>23</sup> When combined with PFMT, EA is beneficial for improving SUI in women compared with medications.<sup>23</sup>

## **Overflow Incontinence**

### **Women**

In women, bladder outlet obstruction is typically caused by fibroids or POP. In these cases, treating the underlying pathology with medication, surgical intervention or pessary devices can be curative.

### **Men**

In men, obstruction is usually caused by benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH).<sup>24</sup>  $\alpha$ -1-blockers relax the smooth muscle of the bladder neck and prostate to allow passage of urine. These medications should be used in patients with moderate to severe lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS).<sup>24</sup>

When choosing an  $\alpha$ -1-blocker for the treatment of LUTS/BPH, the AUA recommends reviewing the side effect profiles of options.<sup>25</sup> Selective  $\alpha$ -1a blockers tamsulosin and silodosin are less likely to cause orthostatic hypotension compared with nonselective

$\alpha$ -1 blockers like terazosin and doxazosin.<sup>25</sup> Selective  $\alpha$ -1a blockers should be considered in patients on multiple hypertensive medications or those at risk of orthostatic hypotension. If a patient on  $\alpha$ -1 blockers is bothered by ejaculatory dysfunction (EjD), switching to an  $\alpha$ -1 blocker like alfuzosin is recommended.<sup>25</sup>

If a patient is still symptomatic with  $\alpha$ -1-blocker therapy, a 5- $\alpha$  reductase inhibitor (5-ARI) like finasteride or dutasteride should be used in patients with a prostate volume of  $> 30$  mL on imaging or a prostate specific antigen (PSA)  $> 1.5$  ng/dL.<sup>25</sup> Since 5-ARIs reduce PSA by 50% after 3 months of use, it is important for clinicians screening for prostate cancer to double the PSA in patients on chronic 5-ARI therapy for accurate assessment. Studies have shown a delay in prostate cancer diagnosis when physicians are unaware of this effect.<sup>25</sup>

In patients with LUTS/BPH and erectile dysfunction, daily tadalafil 5 mg should be offered to help with both conditions.<sup>25</sup>

### Older Adults

In the elderly, often defined in some studies as people  $> 55$  years old<sup>26</sup>, overflow incontinence can be attributed to a variety of medications that cause reduced detrusor activity and subsequent urinary retention.<sup>27</sup> Patients with underlying BPH are at highest risk of drug-induced urinary retention leading to overflow incontinence. The most common medications to cause acute urinary retention are drugs with anticholinergic effects, including antihistamines, antipsychotics, tricyclic antidepressants, antiparkinsonian agents, and anticholinergics for COPD/asthma or OAB.<sup>27</sup> Males over the age of 45 years on calcium channel blockers and anticholinergic medications have tripled the risk of urinary retention.<sup>27</sup> Physicians should use these medications judiciously in patients with BPH or those at risk for urinary retention.

### Neurogenic Bladder

Current guidelines recommend clean intermittent catheterization (CIC) over indwelling and suprapubic catheters for neurogenic lower urinary tract dysfunction (NLUTD).<sup>28</sup> Catheterization should occur 4 to 6 times daily to relieve bladder pressure, avoid infection, and prevent upper urinary tract damage from hydronephrosis. Patients should be instructed to wash their hands and genitals with

soap and water before catheter insertion.<sup>29</sup> Sterile gloves and technique are not needed. If a prelubricated catheter is not used, patients should be instructed to apply water-based lubricant to the distal two inches of the catheter before insertion.<sup>29</sup>

A common complication of CIC, CAUTI. Hydrophilic prelubricated single-use catheters are less likely to cause CAUTI compared with standard polyvinyl chloride multi-use catheters.<sup>30</sup> The rate of asymptomatic bacteriuria (35.2% vs 36.8%,  $P = .877$ ) is similar in both groups.<sup>30</sup> Since the presence of asymptomatic bacteria is common in CIC patients and does not require treatment, urine should only be tested for infection if the patient is symptomatic.

### Conclusion

Urinary incontinence management varies depending on the type of incontinence and severity of symptoms. First-line treatment for OAB and SUI is nonpharmacologic management. Pharmacologic management with  $\alpha$ -1-blockers is recommended as first-line treatment for moderate to severe overflow incontinence from BPH. Drug side effects can often lead to discontinuation due to poor tolerability.  $\beta$ -3 agonists tend to have less anticholinergic side effects compared with antimuscarinics for OAB. Third-line therapies are for those who fail conservative and pharmacologic therapies and lack high-grade evidence. Future advancements in incontinence management include platelet-rich plasma (PRP). A recently published 2024 randomized trial suggests that periurethral PRP injections had a good safety profile and were superior to sham injections in improving SUI symptoms.<sup>31</sup> Clinicians should assess type of incontinence, patient goals, side effect profile, and tolerability to determine the most appropriate option.

---

We acknowledge medical librarian Robin Sewell for her assistance with the literature search.

To see this article online, please go to: <http://jabfm.org/content/37/5/909.full>.

### References

1. Tran LN, Puckett Y. Urinary incontinence. In: *StatPearls*. StatPearls Publishing; 2022. Accessed February 28, 2023. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK559095/>.
2. Gormley EA, Lightner DJ, Burgio KL, Society of Urodynamics, Female Pelvic Medicine & Urogenital Reconstruction, et al. Diagnosis and treatment of

- overactive bladder (non-neurogenic) in adults: AUA/SUFU guideline. *J Urol*. 2012;188:2455–63.
3. Burgio KL, Kraus SR, Johnson TM, et al. Effectiveness of combined behavioral and drug therapy for overactive bladder symptoms in men: a randomized clinical trial. *JAMA Intern Med* 2020;180:411–9.
  4. Carlson K, Civitarese A, Baverstock R. OnabotulinumtoxinA for the treatment of idiopathic overactive bladder is effective and safe for repeated use. *Can Urol Assoc J* 2017;11:E179–E183.
  5. Eldred-Evans D, Sahai A. Medium- to long-term outcomes of botulinum toxin A for idiopathic overactive bladder. *Ther Adv Urol* 2017;9:3–10.
  6. Szymański JK, Słabuszewska-Józwiak A, Zareôba K, Jakiel G. Neuromodulation - a therapeutic option for refractory overactive bladder. A recent literature review. *Wideochir Inne Tech Maloinwazyjne* 2019;14:476–85.
  7. Xia L, Yan H, Sun Y, et al. Pooled analysis of the efficacy and safety of tibial nerve stimulation versus antimuscarinic agents in the management of overactive bladder syndrome. *Medicine (Baltimore)* 2021;100:e27745.
  8. Charalampous I, Tailor VK, Digesu A. Vaginal laser for overactive bladder syndrome. *Int Urogynecol J* 2020;31:1515–7.
  9. Hafidh B, Baradwan S, Latifah HM, et al. CO<sub>2</sub> laser therapy for management of stress urinary incontinence in women: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Ther Adv Urol* 2023;15:17562872231210216.
  10. Hargreaves E, Baker K, Barry G, et al. Acupuncture for treating overactive bladder in adults. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2022;9:CD013519.
  11. Stoniute A, Madhuvrata P, Still M, Barron-Millar E, Nabi G, Omar MI. Oral anticholinergic drugs versus placebo or no treatment for managing overactive bladder syndrome in adults. *Cochrane Incontinence Group, ed. Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2023;5:CD003781.
  12. Yeowell G, Smith P, Nazir J, Hakimi Z, Siddiqui E, Fatoye F. Real-world persistence and adherence to oral antimuscarinics and mirabegron in patients with overactive bladder (OAB): a systematic literature review. *BMJ Open* 2018;8:e021889.
  13. Kennelly MJ. A comparative review of oxybutynin chloride formulations: pharmacokinetics and therapeutic efficacy in overactive bladder. *Rev Urol* 2010;12:12–9.
  14. Wani MM, Sheikh MI, Bhat T, Bhat Z, Bhat A. Comparison of antimuscarinic drugs to beta adrenergic agonists in overactive bladder: a literary review. *Curr Urol* 2021;15:153–60.
  15. Staskin D, Frankel J, Varano S, Shortino D, Jankowich R, Mudd PN. International phase III, randomized, double-blind, placebo and active controlled study to evaluate the safety and efficacy of Vibegron in patients with symptoms of overactive bladder: EMPOWUR. *J Urol* 2020;204:316–24.
  16. Kinjo M, Masuda K, Nakamura Y, Miyakawa J, Tambo M, Fukuhara H. Comparison of Mirabegron and Vibegron in women with treatment-naïve overactive bladder: a randomized controlled study. *Urology* 2023;175:67–73.
  17. Herschorn S, Chapple CR, Abrams P, et al. Efficacy and safety of combinations of mirabegron and solifenacin compared with monotherapy and placebo in patients with overactive bladder (SYNERGY study). *BJU Int* 2017;120:562–75.
  18. Overby Z, Persons RK, Carrillo MJ. Clinical inquiries. What is the best nonsurgical therapy for pelvic organ prolapse? *J Fam Pract* 2014;63:471–479.
  19. Hsieh MF, Tsai HW, Liou WS, et al. Long-term compliance of vaginal pessaries: does stress urinary incontinence matter? *Medicine (Baltimore)* 2019;98:e15063.
  20. Malinauskas AP, Bressan EFM, de Melo A, Brasil CA, Lordêlo P, Torelli L. Efficacy of pelvic floor physiotherapy intervention for stress urinary incontinence in postmenopausal women: systematic review. *Arch Gynecol Obstet* 2022;308:13–24. Published online July 13.
  21. Todhunter-Brown A, Hazelton C, Campbell P, Elders A, Hagen S, McClurg D. Conservative interventions for treating urinary incontinence in women: an overview of Cochrane systematic reviews. *Cochrane Incontinence Group, ed. Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2022;9:CD012337.
  22. Yang N, Ge X, Ye J, et al. Efficacy of acupuncture for urinary incontinence in middle-aged and elderly women: a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *Eur J Obstet Gynecol Reprod Biol* 2021;257:138–43.
  23. Kannan P, Bello UM. Efficacy of various forms of acupuncture for the treatment of urinary incontinence in women: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Explore (NY)* 2023;19:26–35.
  24. Bardsley A. An overview of urinary incontinence. *Br J Nurs Mark Nurs* 2016;25:S14–S21.
  25. Lerner LB, McVary KT, Barry MJ, et al. Management of lower urinary tract symptoms attributed to benign prostatic hyperplasia: AUA guideline part I—initial work-up and medical management. *J Urol* 2021;206:806–17.
  26. Teunissen TAM, de Jonge A, van Weel C, Lagro-Janssen ALM. Treating urinary incontinence in the elderly—conservative measures that work: a systematic review. *J Fam Pract* 2004;53:25–30, 32.
  27. Verhamme KMC, Sturkenboom MCJM, Stricker BHC, Bosch R. Drug-induced urinary retention: incidence, management and prevention. *Drug Saf* 2008;31:373–88.
  28. Ginsberg DA, Boone TB, Cameron AP, et al. The AUA/SUFU Guideline on adult neurogenic lower urinary tract dysfunction: diagnosis and evaluation. *J Urol* 2021;206:1097–105.

29. Self-catheterization (clean intermittent catheterization): how to. Cleveland Clinic. Accessed March 4, 2023. Available at: <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/treatments/15434-clean-intermittent-catheterization>.
30. Campeau L, Shamout S, Baverstock RJ, et al. Canadian Urological Association best practice report: catheter use. *Can Urol Assoc J* 2020;14: E281–E289.
31. Grigoriadis T, Kalantzis C, Zacharakis D, et al. Platelet-rich plasma for the treatment of stress urinary incontinence—a randomized trial. *Urogynecology (Phila)* 2024;30:42–9.
32. Burgio KL, Locher JL, Goode PS, et al. Behavioral vs drug treatment for urge urinary incontinence in older women: a randomized controlled trial. *JAMA* 1998;280:1995–2000.
33. Liu P, Li Y, Shi B, Zhang Q, Guo H. Comparison of different types of therapy for overactive bladder: a systematic review and network meta-analysis. *Front Med (Lausanne)* 2022;9:1014291.
34. Finazzi-Agrò E, Petta F, Sciobica F, Pasqualetti P, Musco S, Bove P. Percutaneous tibial nerve stimulation effects on detrusor overactivity incontinence are not due to a placebo effect: a randomized, double-blind, placebo controlled trial. *J Urol* 2010;184:2001–6.
35. Lin YH, Hsieh WC, Huang L, Liang CC. Effect of non-ablative laser treatment on overactive bladder symptoms, urinary incontinence and sexual function in women with urodynamic stress incontinence. *Taiwan J Obstet Gynecol* 2017;56:815–20.
36. Seki AS, Bianchi-Ferraro AMHM, Fonseca ESM, Sartori MGF, Girão MJBC, Jarmy-Di Bella ZIK. CO2 Laser and radiofrequency compared to a sham control group in treatment of stress urinary incontinence (LARF study arm 3). A randomized controlled trial. *Int Urogynecol J* 2022;33:3535–42.
37. Oefelein MG. Safety and tolerability profiles of anticholinergic agents used for the treatment of overactive bladder. *Drug Saf* 2011;34:733–54.
38. Myrbetriq [Drug Label]. Published online April 2018. Available at: [https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/drugsatfda\\_docs/label/2018/202611s011lbl.pdf](https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/drugsatfda_docs/label/2018/202611s011lbl.pdf).
39. Gemtesa [Drug Label]. Published online December 2020. Available at: [https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/drugsatfda\\_docs/label/2020/213006s000lbl.pdf](https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/drugsatfda_docs/label/2020/213006s000lbl.pdf).
40. Castro RA, Arruda RM, Zanetti MRD, Santos PD, Sartori MGF, Girão MJBC. Single-blind, randomized, controlled trial of pelvic floor muscle training, electrical stimulation, vaginal cones, and no active treatment in the management of stress urinary incontinence. *Clinics (Sao Paulo)* 2008;63: 465–72.
41. Aksac B, Aki S, Karan A, Yalcin O, Isikoglu M, Eskiuyurt N. Biofeedback and pelvic floor exercises for the rehabilitation of urinary stress incontinence. *Gynecol Obstet Invest* 2003;56:23–7.
42. Liu Z, Liu Y, Xu H, et al. Effect of electroacupuncture on urinary leakage among women with stress urinary incontinence: a randomized clinical trial. *JAMA* 2017;317:2493–501.
43. Narayan P, Tunuguntla HSGR. Long-term efficacy and safety of tamsulosin for benign prostatic hyperplasia. *Rev Urol* 2005;7 Suppl 4:S42–48.
44. Belayneh M, Korownyk C. Treatment of lower urinary tract symptoms in benign prostatic hypertrophy with  $\alpha$ -blockers. *Can Fam Physician* 2016;62: e523.
45. Dimitropoulos K, Gravas S. Fixed-dose combination therapy with dutasteride and tamsulosin in the management of benign prostatic hyperplasia. *Ther Adv Urol* 2016;8:19–28.