

Drugs to Treat Overactive Bladder: What You Should Know

What is overactive bladder?

The symptoms of overactive bladder usually include a sudden urge to urinate even if you recently went to the bathroom. You might also leak urine (incontinence) and need to urinate eight or more times a day.

Treatment can ease your symptoms and improve your quality of life.

It's important to get a proper diagnosis.

Talk to your doctor for a correct diagnosis. There are some similar conditions that need different treatments:

- Stress incontinence: Coughing, running, or laughing cause urination.
- Overflow incontinence: You can't urinate fully. Something may be blocking the flow.

Other conditions can cause similar symptoms, including diabetes, urinary-tract infections, kidney stones, and prostate problems.

Some medicines can increase urination—such as diuretics used to treat high blood pressure.

How is overactive bladder treated?

Nondrug treatments can help a lot.

- With “bladder training,” you learn to urinate at regular times. You practice holding your urine for longer and longer periods.
- Kegel exercises strengthen the muscles that control the flow of urine.
- Lifestyle changes can help. Cut back on caffeine and alcohol. Drink less liquids between dinner and bedtime.

Your doctor may recommend that you also try a medicine if your symptoms are severe—for example, if you urinate 15 times a day or more, or leak urine several times a day.

Side effects can be a problem.

The prescription drugs used to treat overactive bladder help some people, but they often have side effects. Dry mouth and constipation are common and can be severe. Blurred vision, dizziness, and mental confusion are less common, but worrisome. Many people stop taking overactive bladder medication due to side effects.

You should not take these drugs if you have an eye condition called “narrow-angle glaucoma.”

Our advice:

Try nondrug treatments first. If they don't help enough, talk with your doctor about also taking an overactive bladder drug. One drug, the Oxytrol patch, is sold over-the-counter. Before trying it on your own, talk to your doctor and get a proper diagnosis.

We compared how well the different drugs work to reduce symptoms. The main differences were in side effects and costs. We chose the following as *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs* to treat overactive bladder—if you and your doctor decide that a drug is worth trying:

Generic tolterodine

Tolterodine is our *Best Buy* pick because it has fewer side effects. To save money, you can try the less expensive generic **oxybutynin** first. It has more side effects, but they are not a problem for everyone. See the chart on the next page to compare costs.



Prescription drugs for overactive bladder can cause unpleasant side effects. Try nondrug treatments first.

Overactive Bladder: Drug Comparison Chart*

Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs are in blue. We recommend these drugs because they work at least as well and are as safe or safer as the other drugs. The dollar symbol **\$** means the dose of that drug may be available for a low monthly cost through programs offered by large chain stores, like Costco, CVS, Kmart, Kroger, Sam's Club, Target, Walmart, and Walgreens. Some of these stores have restrictions or charge a membership fee, however.

Our analysis is based on a scientific review by the Oregon Health and Science University-based Drug Effectiveness Review Project. This is a summary of a longer, more detailed report you can find at www.CRBestBuyDrugs.org.

Best Buy	Generic Name & Strength	Brand Name ^A	Dose per Day ^B	Average Cost per Month ^C
	Darifenacin 7.5 mg tablets	Enablex	One	\$219
	Darifenacin 15 mg tablets	Enablex	One	\$208
	Fesoterodine 4 mg tablets	Toviaz	One	\$199
	Fesoterodine 8 mg tablets	Toviaz	One	\$199
	Mirabegron 25 mg tablets	Myrbetriq	One	\$240
	Mirabegron 50 mg tablets	Myrbetriq	One	\$246
	Oxybutynin 5 mg tablets	Generic	Two	\$24 \$
	Oxybutynin 5 mg tablets	Generic	Three	\$36 \$
	Oxybutynin extended-release 5 mg tablets	Generic	One	\$72 \$
	Oxybutynin extended-release 10 mg tablets	Ditropan XL	One	\$173
	Oxybutynin extended-release 10 mg tablets	Generic	One	\$71 \$
	Oxybutynin extended-release 15 mg tablets	Ditropan XL	One	\$205
	Oxybutynin extended-release 15 mg tablets	Generic	One	\$73 \$
	Oxybutynin skin patch 3.9 mg/ 24 hrs	Oxytrol	New patch every 3-4 days	\$374
	Oxybutynin topical gel 10%	Gelnique	Apply once daily	\$244
	Solifenacin 5 mg tablets	Vesicare	One	\$231
	Solifenacin 10 mg tablets	Vesicare	One	\$232
CR BEST BUY	Tolterodine 1 mg tablets	Generic	Two	\$183
	Tolterodine 2 mg tablets	Detrol	Two	\$294
CR BEST BUY	Tolterodine 2 mg tablets	Generic	Two	\$167
	Tolterodine extended-release 2 mg capsules	Detrol LA	One	\$255
	Tolterodine extended-release 4 mg capsules	Detrol LA	One	\$231
	Trospium 20 mg tablets	Generic	Two	\$150
	Trospium 60 mg extended-release capsules	Sanctura XR	One	\$228
	Trospium 60 mg extended-release capsules	Generic	One	\$191

* If a drug is not listed, that indicates it had less than 20 prescriptions per month, so we do not list it because the price is unreliable and pharmacies might be unlikely to carry it due to low demand.

A. "Generic" means the price given is for the generic version.

B. As typically prescribed.

C. Prices reflect nationwide retail average for August 2013, rounded to the nearest dollar. Prices are derived by Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs from data provided by Symphony Health Solutions, which is not involved in our analysis or recommendations.

This series is produced by Consumer Reports and *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs*, a public information project supported by grants from the state Attorney General Consumer and Prescriber Education Grant Program which is funded by the multi-state settlement of consumer fraud claims regarding the marketing of the prescription drug Neurontin. This brief should not be viewed as a substitute for a consultation with a medical or health professional. It is provided to enhance communication with your doctor, not replace it.