



Overactive bladder and related incontinence are very common. Some 15 to 20 million people in the U.S. have the condition. That includes one in four women and one in ten men aged 65 and older.

To help you and your doctor choose an overactive bladder medicine – if you need one – *Consumer Reports* has evaluated the most commonly used drugs in this category based on their effectiveness, safety, and cost. This 2-page brief is a summary of a 14-page report you can access on the Internet at www.CRBestBuyDrugs.org. You can also learn about other drugs we've analyzed on this free Web site. Our independent evaluations are based on scientific reviews conducted by the Oregon Health and Science University-based Drug Effectiveness Review Project. Grants from the Engelberg Foundation and National Library of Medicine help fund *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs*.

DO YOU NEED AN OVERACTIVE BLADDER DRUG?

If you have only mild to moderate overactive bladder, your doctor may recommend non-drug measures first. Mild overactive bladder means that your urges to urinate are tolerable and you have little or no incontinence (leakage). If your symptoms are more severe or worsen over time, you will probably need to take a drug in addition to using non-drug measures. People with more severe overactive bladder can need to urinate 13 or more times per day and may also have two or more incontinence episodes per day.

Symptoms and Other Bladder Disorders

Main Symptoms of Overactive Bladder

- An overwhelming urge to urinate
- Leakage of urine before you can make it to a bathroom
- Frequent trips to the bathroom with passage of small amounts of urine each time
- A need to get up more than twice a night to urinate

Other Bladder Disorders

These have symptoms similar to overactive bladder. An accurate diagnosis is important because they are treated differently.

- **Stress incontinence.** Involuntary loss of urine when coughing, sneezing, running, jumping, or even laughing
- **Overflow incontinence.** Usually caused by an obstruction that does not let all the urine be expelled
- **Combined overactive bladder and stress incontinence.** Symptoms of both

Our Recommendations

The five prescription drugs used to treat overactive bladder are only modestly effective and have side effects that can limit their usefulness.

People with only mild symptoms should try non-drug measures first, such as cutting back on caffeinated and alcoholic beverages and learning Kegel exercises to strengthen pelvic muscles.

People with more severe symptoms usually benefit from learning such techniques as well, but may also get additional symptom relief from taking a medicine. The drugs work better in tandem with non-drug measures than on their own.

None of the five drugs – oxybutynin (Ditropan, Ditropan XL, and Oxytrol, a skin patch); tolterodine (Detrol, Detrol LA); trospium (Sanctura); solifenacin (Vesicare); and darifenacin (Enablex) – is any more effective than the others. However, they differ in cost and the side effects they cause. Side effects include dry mouth, constipation, and mental confusion.

In studies, Ditropan XL, Detrol LA, Sanctura, Vesicare, and Enablex have caused fewer side effects.

Taking effectiveness, side effects, safety, dosing convenience, and cost into account, we have chosen the following as *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs* to treat overactive bladder – if your doctor and you have concluded a drug is worth trying:




- **Tolterodine (Detrol)** – two pills per day
- **Tolterodine extended release (Detrol LA)** – one pill per day
- **Trospium (Santura)** – one pill per day
- **Oxybutynin patch (Oxytrol)** – two patches per week

All these medicines cost quite a bit more than generic oxybutynin, the only generic now available to treat overactive bladder. Their choice as *Best Buys* is justified by their lower risk of side effects. Tolterodine could soon become available as a generic drug.

Some people tolerate the side effects of generic oxybutynin well. If you have no drug coverage, we advise trying that first.

This information was last updated in September 2006.

Cost of Drugs to Treat Overactive Bladder

Generic Name and Dose	Brand Name(s) ¹	Frequency of Use Per Day ²	Average Monthly Cost ³
Oxybutynin 5mg	Ditropan	Two	\$79
Oxybutynin 5mg	Generic	Two	\$20
Oxybutynin 5mg	Ditropan	Three	\$118
Oxybutynin 5mg	Generic	Three	\$29
Oxybutynin extended release 5mg	Ditropan XL	One	\$122
Oxybutynin extended release 10mg	Ditropan XL	One	\$123
Oxybutynin extended release 15mg	Ditropan XL	One	\$127
 Oxybutynin skin patch 3.9mg/24hrs	Oxytrol	See note ⁴	\$115-\$170 ⁴
 Tolterodine 1mg	Detrol	Two	\$69
 Tolterodine 2mg	Detrol	Two	\$69
 Tolterodine extended release 2mg	Detrol LA	One	\$119
 Tolterodine extended release 4mg	Detrol LA	One	\$120
 Trospium 20mg	Sanctura	One	\$58
Trospium 20mg	Sanctura	Two	\$116
Solifenacin 5mg	Vesicare	One	\$121
Solifenacin 10mg	Vesicare	One	\$121
Darifenacin 7.5mg	Enablex	One	\$116
Darifenacin 15mg	Enablex	One	\$116

1. "Generic" means the price given is for the generic version. Generic copies of brand-name drugs have the same active ingredient and are just as effective as the brand drug.
2. As commonly or typically prescribed.
3. Prices reflect nationwide retail average for May 2006, rounded to the nearest dollar. Prices are derived by *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs* from data provided by Wolters Kluwer Health, Pharmaceutical Audit Suite.
4. The manufacturer's recommendation is to change the patch every three to four days but some people may need a new patch every other day to get a meaningful benefit. The price range reflects that variable use.