

Cochrane Corner

Anticholinergic drugs are effective for urge incontinence

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The problem

Are anticholinergic drugs effective for urge incontinence?

The situation

About 16% of the population have urge incontinence. This figure includes men and women.

Clinical bottom line

The medications that are available in New Zealand are Oxybutynin 5mg two to three times daily, max 5mg four times daily (in elderly patients, 2.5mg twice daily), and Tolterodine (Detrusitol) 2mg twice daily. These were both included in

the review. Both would appear to be effective but the doses were not clarified.

There was a statistically significant increase in dry mouth but adverse effects did not result in an excess of participants leaving the studies.

Table 1. Urge incontinence

	Success	Evidence	Harms
Anticholinergic medication	On average people taking anticholinergic medications had about five less trips to the toilet and four less leakage episodes every week. NNT ranges from four to eight to get a benefit.	Cochrane review ¹	NNH for dry mouth from 1 to 10

NNT = numbers needed to treat for one person to get an improvement.

NNH = numbers needed to treat for one person to get an adverse effect.

References

1. Nabi G, Cody JD, Ellis G, Herbison P, Hay-Smith J. Anticholinergic drugs versus placebo for overactive bladder syndrome in adults. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2006, Issue 4. Art. No.: CD003781. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD003781.pub2. .

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