

## Give Your Bladder a Hug This Month

### Canadians choose to ignore symptoms – hope they'll go away

**Toronto, November 23, 2009** - What better time than in November – Incontinence Awareness Month - to give your bladder some well needed attention?



A recent poll conducted by Leger Marketing, on behalf of the Powder Room - a national education program for those with overactive bladder (OAB) - asked 1,500 Canadians about their bladder health. The findings revealed that although people are experiencing OAB symptoms, most are choosing not to seek medical attention - perhaps assuming the frustrating and embarrassing symptoms will go away, or that they will just have to live with them.

The survey was conducted between September 14th and September 17th, 2009. Using a national random sample of 1504 Canadian adults 18 years of age and older (pregnant women were excluded), the method simulates a probability sample which yielded a maximum margin of error of +/-2.5%, 19 times out of 20.

Approximately one-third of respondents reported that they experienced involuntary loss of urine from coughing, sneezing, or laughing; they had to rush to the bathroom for fear of not making it in time; and/or they urinate more than 8 times in a 24-hour period.

Fran Stewart, a nurse continence advisor at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, suggests that people may believe that the constant urge to go to the bathroom, or waking up from sleep several times to use the washroom (known as nocturia), and urinary leakage are all a part of the aging process. "Not so", says Ms. Stewart. "The notion that OAB sufferers just have to live with it is simply not true."

"Lifestyle modification techniques such as drinking bladder-friendly liquids (i.e. caffeine restriction), keeping a bladder diary and Kegel exercises may improve symptoms significantly," explains Stewart. "In other cases, prescription medication can improve overall quality of life. People don't have to limit social activity, worry about locating the nearest bathroom or feel a constant sense of frustration with the condition."

Stewart suggests asking the following questions as a means of evaluating the impact of an overactive bladder on quality of life: "Do I go to the restroom more than eight times a day? Do I have to wear a pad when I go out? Can I sit through a movie without having to use the bathroom? Can I finish a tennis game? Do I avoid situations or activities because of my bladder? Is my overactive bladder causing me embarrassment or problems of intimacy? If you answered yes to any of these questions, you should speak to your doctor."

Overactive bladder is more than meets the eye, suggests the Canadian Continence Foundation, the organization behind Incontinence Awareness Month. Nearly 22 per cent of Canadians 18 or older have bladder problems, costing the Canadian healthcare system \$1.5 billion per year in direct costs related to physician and hospital care, drug costs and long-term care.<sup>1</sup>

In November, the Canadian Continence Foundation and the Powder Room are encouraging Canadians to pay attention to their bladder and the symptoms of an overactive bladder. The initiative also encourages people to approach their doctor if they have associated pain, sleeplessness or frustration.

## **ABOUT OVERACTIVE BLADDER**

Overactive bladder affects approximately 12 to 18 per cent of Canadians. Having the sudden “urge” to urinate, even when the bladder is not full, is the primary symptom of overactive bladder and not, as some believe, incontinence (urine leakage).<sup>2 3</sup>

## **Quality of Life (QoL)**

In a person with overactive bladder, the bladder muscle begins to contract while the bladder is filling with urine, rather than when the bladder is full. The individual experiences a sudden urge to use the bathroom, which can be difficult to put off. A recent study of more than 1000 OAB patients, *OAB Unveiled*, revealed:

- 75% claimed that their day to day life was affected with OAB; 50% said it affected them all, or almost all of the time;
- 51% found it difficult to broach the subject of OAB with their doctor and among those that did, 91% initiated the conversation themselves;
- As many as 25% said that they waited more than four years before discussing OAB with their doctor;
- 87% of individuals suffered negative feelings in coping with OAB;
- More than half of the respondents said that as a result of suffering from OAB, they couldn't get a good night's sleep, and, often had to map out bathrooms when out in public;
- 40% of individuals have resorted to wearing diapers or protective pads.
- Side effects top the list among reasons to stop treatment;
- Family physicians play a key role in treatment, and among 69% of respondents, were identified as the key source for OAB information.

## **ABOUT THE POWDER ROOM**

The Powder Room is a national and fully bilingual educational program developed in collaboration with Canadian healthcare professionals. The program works to improve the quality of life of individuals with overactive bladder by helping them to understand, manage and treat the condition. For more information on overactive bladder, visit [www.powderroom.ca](http://www.powderroom.ca). The Powder Room has been made possible through an education grant from Astellas Pharma Canada, Inc., a leader in the field of urology.



## Press Release

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<sup>1</sup> The Canadian Continence Foundation <http://www.canadiancontinence.ca/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> Kelleher C, et al. Improved Quality of Life in Patients with Overactive Bladder Symptoms treated with Solifenacin. *BJU International* 2005; 95:81-85.

<sup>3</sup> Wein A, Rackley, R. Overactive Bladder: A Better Understanding of Pathophysiology, Diagnosis and Management. *J Urology* 2006; 175:S5-S10.