

# Urinary Symptoms in Ataxic Disorders



## Overview

Urinary symptoms are common in people with Ataxic disorders. These issues can arise from changes in the nervous system related to the underlying condition, as well as from unrelated urological problems (e.g., prostate enlargement in men or pelvic organ prolapse in women). While symptoms can be bothersome and intrusive, the risk of developing kidney damage is generally low.

## Common Urinary Symptoms in Ataxia

- **Urgency** – Sudden, strong urge to urinate.
- **Frequency** – Needing to urinate more often than usual.
- **Nocturia** – Waking up during the night to urinate.
- **Urinary incontinence** – Leakage before reaching the toilet.
- **Urinary retention** – Difficulty fully emptying the bladder (especially common in Multiple System Atrophy).

## Possible Causes

1. **Neurological changes** – Damage or degeneration in pathways that control bladder storage and emptying.
2. **Muscle coordination issues** – Difficulty relaxing and contracting muscles involved in urination.
3. **Non-neurological factors** – Conditions like infections, prostate problems, or pelvic floor disorders.

## Diagnosis & Evaluation

- **History and symptom review** – Duration, frequency, and type of symptoms.
- **Bladder diary** – Tracking fluid intake, urination times, and leakage episodes.
- **Physical examination** – Includes neurological and pelvic/abdominal assessment.
- **Urinalysis** – Checks for infection or blood in the urine.
- **Ultrasound** – Measures how much urine remains after voiding.
- **Urodynamic testing** – Evaluates bladder function and control.

## Management Strategies

### Lifestyle and Behavioral Approaches

- **Scheduled voiding** – Using the bathroom at set times.
- **Fluid management** – Adjusting intake to reduce symptoms.
- **Pelvic floor exercises** – Strengthening muscles for better control.
- **Bladder training** – Gradually increasing the time between bathroom visits.

### Medical Treatments

- **Medications** – To relax the bladder or reduce urgency/frequency.
- **Catheterization** – Intermittent self-catheterization for those with retention.
- **Treatment of underlying conditions** – Managing infections, prostate problems, or pelvic prolapse.

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## When to Seek Medical Help

Contact your healthcare provider if you experience:

- New or worsening urinary symptoms.
- Pain, burning, or blood in urine.
- Recurrent urinary tract infections.
- Inability to urinate or sudden worsening of retention.

## Key Takeaways

- Urinary symptoms in Ataxic disorders are common and can often be improved with treatment.
- Most cases do not lead to kidney damage.
- A combination of lifestyle strategies, medications, and medical interventions can significantly improve quality of life.
- Early evaluation helps identify treatable causes and prevent complications.

## Resources

- [Neurologed Guidelines on Assessing and Treating Neurogenic Urinary and Sexual Symptoms](#)
- [Pelvic Floor Exercises](#)
- Find a Neuro Urologist: [Ataxia Centers Urology Care Foundation](#)
- [Assessment & Management of Urinary Symptoms in Ataxia Disorders Webinar](#)

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