



The six prescription drugs used to treat overactive bladder are only modestly effective and have limiting side effects. If you have mild symptoms, first try lifestyle changes to see if these provide enough relief. People with more severe symptoms can also benefit from non-drug measures but might experience added relief from also taking medication.

To help you and your doctor choose the right overactive bladder drug if you need one, *Consumers Reports* has evaluated the drugs in this category based on their effectiveness, safety, and cost. This 2-page brief is a summary of a 16-page report you can access on the Internet at ConsumerReportsHealth.org/BestBuyDrugs. You can also learn about other drugs we've analyzed on this free Web site.

DO YOU NEED AN OVERACTIVE BLADDER DRUG?

Overactive bladder is characterized by sudden urges to urinate, having to go more than 10 times per day, and episodes of incontinence or urine leakage. If you have symptoms, it is important to see your doctor to get an accurate diagnosis, because there are several other related disorders that are sometimes confused with overactive bladder.

If your symptoms are relatively mild and don't interfere with your daily activities, most doctors suggest things like cutting back on caffeinated and alcoholic beverages and drinking less before bedtime, along with bladder-training exercises, including Kegel exercises, to strengthen the pelvic muscle that help control urination. These may relieve symptoms enough so that a drug isn't necessary. But if frequent trips to the bathroom interfere with your life, or you're having accidents, then it may be time to see your doctor to determine if a medication might help.

Our Recommendations

There are six drugs for overactive bladder: darifenacin (Enablex); fesoterodine (Toviaz); oxybutynin (Ditropan, Ditropan XL, a skin patch called Oxytrol, a topical gel called Gelnique, and generic); solifenacin (Vesicare); tolterodine (Detrol, Detrol LA); and tiroprium (Sanctura, Sanctura XR). None has been shown to be clearly more effective than the others, but these drugs do differ in cost and the side effects they cause. Side effects include dry mouth, constipation, and possibly blurred vision and dizziness.

Taking into account the evidence for effectiveness and safety, as well as cost, if you need a drug to treat overactive bladder, we have chosen the following as *Consumer Reports Health Best Buy Drugs*:

- Tolterodine (Detrol)
- Tolterodine extended release (Detrol LA)

Both medicines cost quite a bit more than oxybutynin, the only generic now available to treat overactive bladder. Their choice as Best Buys is justified by their lower risk of side effects. Some people tolerate the side effects of generic oxybutynin tablets well. If you do not have health insurance, you might consider trying that first since it is significantly less expensive.

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Overactive Bladder Drugs-Strengths and Weaknesses

Generic name	Brand Name	Strengths	Weaknesses
Oxybutynin tablet (Short-acting)	Ditropan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the market longest, well-known by doctors • Many studies confirm its effectiveness • Generic available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest rate of side effects, including dry mouth and constipation • More people report severe dry mouth compared with other drugs • Need to take 2 to 3 pills a day
Oxybutynin tablet (Extended release)	Ditropan XL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower rate of side effects than short-acting oxybutynin • Needs to be taken just once a day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More expensive than the short-acting form
Oxybutynin transdermal patch	Oxytrol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No need to take a pill • Patch is changed every three to four days • Lower rate of dry mouth compared with oxybutynin pill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irritation at site of patch is common; can be severe
Oxybutynin topical gel	Gelnique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No need to take a pill • Gel is applied to abdomen, upper arm/shoulder, or thigh daily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recently approved; very limited research to date

Overactive Bladder Drugs-Strengths and Weaknesses (continued)

Generic name	Brand Name	Strengths	Weaknesses
Tolterodine (Short-acting)	Detrol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fewer patients report dry mouth or constipation than oxybutynin short-acting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taken twice a day (may be an advantage over oxybutynin tablets, but a disadvantage compared with daily Detrol LA)
Tolterodine (Extended release)	Detrol LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taken once a day Fewer side effects compared with oxybutynin and short-acting Detrol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More expensive than short-acting tolterodine or oxybutynin
Trospium (Short-acting)	Sanctura	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower rate of severe dry mouth than oxybutynin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less research on effectiveness and safety than with oxybutynin and tolterodine
Trospium (Extended release)	Sanctura XR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taken once a day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very limited research to date
Solifenacin	Vesicare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taken once a day Improves some symptoms better than Detrol or Detrol LA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less research on effectiveness and safety than with oxybutynin and tolterodine Higher rates of dry mouth and constipation than Detrol LA
Darifenacin	Enablex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taken once a day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less research on effectiveness and safety than with oxybutynin and tolterodine
Fesoterodine	Toviaz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same active metabolite as tolterodine, but does not require a specific enzyme to convert to the active drug. 10% of Caucasians and up to 19% of African-Americans lack this enzyme. It may have fewer interactions as seen with tolterodine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newest drug on market; limited research to date

Overactive Bladder Drugs-Cost Comparison*

Generic Name and Dose	Brand Name(s) ¹	Frequency of Use Per Day ²	Average Monthly Cost ³
Oxybutynin 5 mg	Ditropan	Two	\$82
Oxybutynin 5 mg	Generic	Two	\$10
Oxybutynin extended-release 5 mg	Ditropan XL	One	\$155
Oxybutynin extended-release 5 mg	Generic	One	\$104
Oxybutynin skin patch 3.9 mg/24 hrs	Oxytrol	See note ⁴	\$195-\$260
Oxybutynin topical gel 10%	Gelnique	Apply once daily	\$179
 Tolterodine 1 mg	Detrol	Two	\$214
 Tolterodine 2 mg	Detrol	Two	\$220
 Tolterodine extended-release 2 mg	Detrol LA	One	\$184
 Tolterodine extended-release 4 mg	Detrol LA	One	\$169
Trospium 20 mg	Sanctura	Two	\$220
Trospium 60 mg	Sanctura XR	One	\$179
Solifenacin 5 mg	Vesicare	One	\$189
Darifenacin 7.5 mg	Enablex	One	\$181
Fesoterodine 4 mg	Toviaz	One	\$174

*Not all drugs and doses provided. For complete list, see full report.

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

2. As typically prescribed.

3. Prices reflect nationwide retail average for March 2010, rounded to the nearest dollar. Prices are derived by Consumer Reports Health Best Buy Drugs from data provided by Wolters Kluwer Pharma Solutions.® Wolters Kluwer is not involved in our analysis or recommendations.

4. The manufacturer's recommendation is to change the patch every three to four days. The price range reflects that variable use.

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