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Botox for bladders

... and other therapies for too-frequent pit stops

BY RANDY DOTINGA
Special to Newsday

Though fame came for its wrinkle-relieving capabilities, Botox has moved on, adding “treatment for overactive bladder” to its resumé.

In that effort, Botox joins other medications and therapies aimed at helping the legions of people — an estimated one in six American adults — so afflicted. The condition affects people of all ages, but it becomes more common as you get older.

People with an overactive bladder aren't necessarily incontinent; many can make it to the bathroom in time. They simply need to rush. And rush. All day long and often into the night.

Though common, overactive bladder is “not really considered a normal part of aging,” said Dr. Marc Schumer, a urologist affiliated with Good Samaritan Hospital Medical Center in West Islip. “It's a treatable condition that people shouldn't have to suffer with.”

NOT ENOUGH ROOM

It's actually a “bladder storage problem” that develops when the bladder fails to properly hold a normal amount of urine, he said. You then feel the need to urinate more frequently and often must instantly rush to a bathroom. In severe cases, he said, people can develop incontinence, which is uncontrolled urination.

A variety of medical issues can contribute to overactive bladder, including such neurological problems as stroke and Parkinson's disease, infections, tumors, stones in the bladder, enlarged prostates in

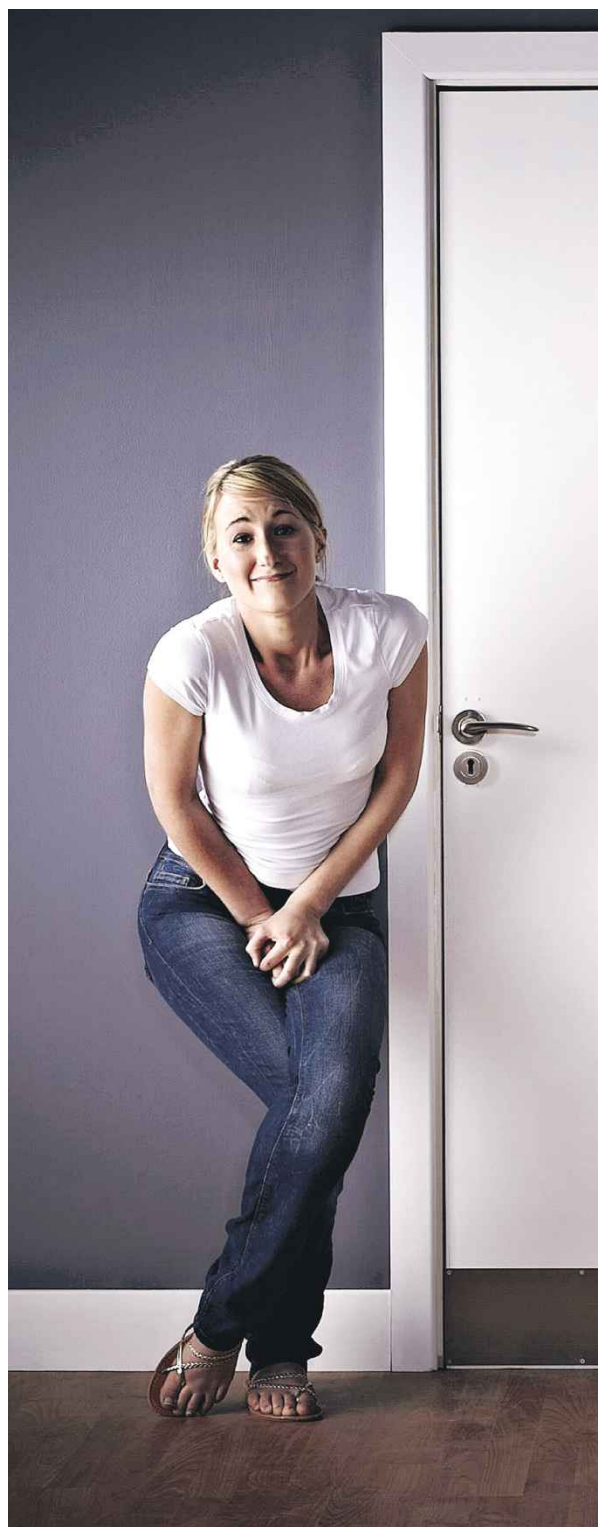
men and more, Schumer said. In some cases, no cause can be found.

When you see a doctor, Schumer said, don't be embarrassed to bring it up. “You have to be honest in terms of how it's disrupting your life and how it's affecting you,” he said. “Give a very true and accurate explanation to your doctor about the severity, the timing of it and what factors make it worse.”

NON-DRUG SOLUTIONS

The American Urological Association recommends that nonmedical behavioral therapies be offered first to people with an overactive bladder. Dr. Howard L. Adler, a clinical associate professor of urology at Stony Brook University, said this includes controlling fluid intake and doing Kegel exercises to strengthen muscles in the genital area. Appropriate for men and women, Kegel exercises can be done whenever you're sitting or lying down — at your desk, in the car, while watching TV or resting on the couch.

Doctors also may recommend biofeedback, avoidance of alcohol and caffeine, which can irritate the blad-



ISTOCK PHOTO

plus **inbrief**

PREVENT LOU GEHRIG'S DISEASE

Eating bright orange, red or yellow fruits and dark-green vegetables rich in antioxidants may help prevent or delay the onset of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, also known as ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease, according to a new study from the Harvard School of Public Health. Researchers found that increasing consumption of carotenoids, particularly beta-carotene and lutein, might reduce the risk for this progressive neurological disease, which attacks nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord. Carrots, yams and mangoes are rich in beta-carotenes, and spinach, collard greens and egg yolks are good sources of lutein.



MORGUE PHOTO

HOLD OFF ON THAT FIRST CIGARETTE

People who smoke a cigarette as soon as they wake up in the morning are more likely to develop lung and oral cancer than other smokers, a new study reveals. Penn State researchers analyzed data from nearly 2,000 adult smokers who provided blood samples and information about their smoking behavior. The investigators found that about 32 percent of the participants smoked their first cigarette of the day within five minutes of waking. Among the others, 31 percent smoked within 6 to 30 minutes, 18 percent smoked within 31 to 60 minutes, and 19 percent smoked more than an hour after waking. People who had a cigarette immediately after waking had higher levels of NNAL — a byproduct of a tobacco-specific cancer-causing substance called NNK — in their blood than those who smoked a half-hour or more after waking, regardless of how many cigarettes they smoked in a day, the researchers reported.

— HealthDay



STOCK PHOTO

der, as well as urinating on a set schedule to avoid surprises.

On the medical side, drugs available to treat overactive bladder include antimuscarinic medications, which adjust the signaling system in the bladder and are believed to have mild side effects. But Dr. Jason Kim, an assistant professor of urology at Stony Brook University, said that these drugs should be used with caution in the elderly, especially those with dementia.

NEW DRUG CHOICES

A new type of medication, called a beta-3 adrenergic agonist (Myrbetriq), which works by relaxing muscles in the bladder, was approved last year by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for overactive bladder treatment. However, it can boost blood pressure, a caution for anyone who also has high blood pressure.

In severe cases, several treatments are available, said Kim. A "pacemaker for the bladder" can control bladder spasms, he said, and a procedure called posterior tibial nerve stimulation has shown success in reducing

symptoms by stimulating a nerve related to the bladder.

BOTOX APPROVED THIS YEAR

And then there's Botox, which received FDA approval in mid-January as a treatment for overactive bladder when other medications had not worked. It had previously been approved for people who had the condition in connection with a neurological problem, Kim said. Physicians inject Botox into the bladder in 10 to 20 locations, in the doctor's office or in an operating room under light sedation or with a local anesthetic, Kim said. "Botox injections usually cause minimal pain," he said. It's thought to help the bladder relax, increasing its storage capacity and reducing episodes of urinary incontinence.

Although side effects are possible — such as urinary tract infection, muscle weakness and inability to urinate, requiring temporary use of a catheter — Kim said, "Overall, Botox injection into the bladder is well tolerated with minimal side effects." Repeat treatments are usually needed because the effect wears off.

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