New Study Links Urinary Troubles at Menopause with Sleep, Body Fat, Reaction Time

CLEVELAND, Ohio (March 11, 2015)—A new study shows not only that urinary troubles are very common at and after menopause, but it also links these problems with belly fat, poor sleep, and slowed reaction time. The study was published online today in Menopause, the journal of The North American Menopause Society (NAMS).

Some 350 Japanese perimenopausal and postmenopausal women from 40 to 76 years old who all took part in a health and nutrition education program participated in this study at the menopause clinic of the Tokyo Medical and Dental University Hospital. They completed questionnaires about their menopause health-related quality-of-life and about depression and anxiety. The health questionnaire asked about some common urinary and genital symptoms, including how often the women were bothered by frequent urination; how many times they woke up at night to urinate; whether they leaked urine when they felt the urge to urinate (known as urge incontinence); whether they were bothered by vaginal dryness; and whether they leaked urine when they coughed, laughed, or sneezed (known as stress incontinence).

The researchers not only determined how common these problems were but also looked for statistical links between the urinary problems and potentially related issues, such as menopausal status, vaginal dryness, body fat, anxiety or depression, sleep problems, and blood pressure.

Nearly half of the women (46%) were bothered by urinary frequency more than once a week—with 22% bothered by it almost every day. Stress incontinence was the next most common problem, which bothered 33% of the women. Having to get up during the night to urinate and urge incontinence each bothered about 11% of the women.

The statistical analysis used to find characteristics strongly tied to these problems (independent risk factors) linked urinary frequency with unrefreshing sleep; stress incontinence with body fat; nighttime urination with the ratio of waist-t- hip measurements and with unrefreshing sleep; and urge incontinence with reaction time.

Whether these factors cause the urinary problems isn’t clear. For example, it’s hard to determine whether someone wakes up at night and then has to urinate or whether the need to urinate wakes her up. Nevertheless, says NAMS Executive Director Margery Gass, MD, NCMP, “Controlling weight and
getting enough sleep are important for women at and after menopause for many reasons. Keeping urinary problems at bay may be one of the benefits.”

The article, “Prevalence and predictors of storage lower urinary tract symptoms in perimenopausal and postmenopausal women attending a menopause clinic,” will be published in the October print edition of *Menopause*.

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Founded in 1989, The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) is North America’s leading nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the health and quality of life of all women during midlife and beyond through an understanding of menopause and healthy aging. Its multidisciplinary membership of 2,000 leaders in the field—including clinical and basic science experts from medicine, nursing, sociology, psychology, nutrition, anthropology, epidemiology, pharmacy, and education—makes NAMS uniquely qualified to serve as the definitive resource for health professionals and the public for accurate, unbiased information about menopause and healthy aging. To learn more about NAMS, visit www.menopause.org.