

## Frequent urination: why you keep going and what it means

Frequent urination tells you something in the urinary system has changed, but not what. The kidneys may be making too much urine, the bladder may be storing too little, emptying may be incomplete, or the lining may be irritated, and the right treatment depends on which one it is.

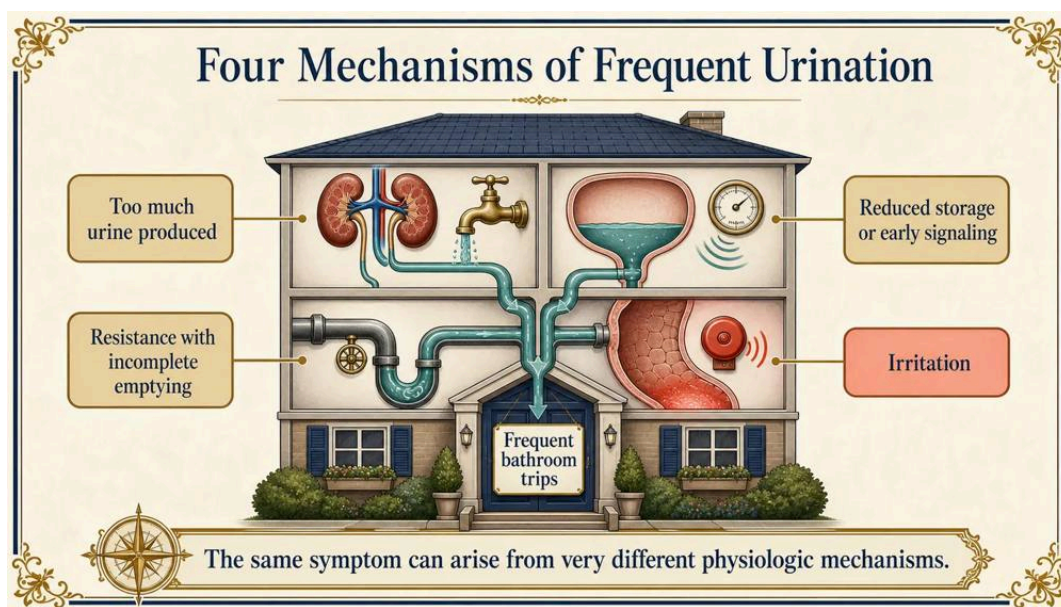


Figure 5.1. Four Mechanisms of Frequent Urination.

### Key points

- Frequency is a counting word, not a diagnosis.
- The volume of each void matters: small frequent voids point toward storage, emptying or irritation; large voids point toward the kidneys making too much urine.
- A two- or three-day bladder diary replaces memory with evidence and can answer questions a sophisticated image cannot.
- A normal urinalysis does not mean nothing is wrong; it redirects the workup.
- A bladder-storage medication cannot solve a problem caused mainly by excess urine production.
- Fluid timing matters more than indiscriminate fluid restriction.

### Get prompt care if you notice

- Sudden complete inability to urinate, with or without bladder pain
- Fever or chills with flank pain
- Visible blood in the urine
- Persistent fever with urinary symptoms
- Urinary symptoms with confusion, fainting, severe weakness or new neurologic symptoms

### Questions to ask your urologist

- Does my pattern suggest too much urine production, poor storage or incomplete emptying?
- Would a bladder diary help tell those apart?
- Could sleep, a medication, constipation, diabetes or my fluid timing be contributing?
- What question will each proposed test answer?
- How will we measure improvement, and what would it tell us if the first treatment does not work?

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