

Putting the Brake on Bathroom Breaks

After three years of worrying how she'd find a bathroom every time she went out, Brick resident Sharon Coryell, 56, now has a new lease on life.



"I have my life back!" Thanks to the help of an Ocean Medical Center urologist, it's smooth sailing ahead for Sharon Coryell of Brick.

"My life was totally encumbered," says Sharon. "I was going to the bathroom eight to 12 times per day and four times per night. I was never getting any sleep. You don't realize how much an overactive bladder can impact your life."

For overactive bladder (OAB) sufferers with frequency-urgency problems, the signal that tells the brain the bladder is full is triggered prematurely and with more force, creating the strong need to go to the bathroom frequently and sometimes episodes of leakage.

However, with today's medical technology, physicians like Michael L. Howard, M.D., a urologist affiliated with Ocean

Medical Center, now are offering OAB sufferers a treatment alternative called InterStim therapy.

Similar to a pacemaker, InterStim is a device implanted under the skin that stimulates the nerves to the bladder. InterStim has the ability to be customized to the specific needs of each patient, and it also can be used in people who are unable to empty their bladder.

"Because the procedure is minimally invasive and reversible, it was a very viable choice for me," says Sharon.

Sharon underwent an outpatient procedure for a test implant first, in which a fine wire was placed near her tailbone. The wire was attached to a small, por-

OAB STATISTICS

- 33 million people in the United States suffer from overactive bladder.
- The adult diaper business is a \$4 billion per year industry.

ABOUT *the* DOCTOR



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table device that acted like the implant and ultimately would determine whether Sharon was a successful candidate for the implant. "When I had the test implant put in, I was like a new woman," says Sharon. "I was glowing."

According to Medtronic, the makers of InterStim, 70 percent of the people who have the implant see a significant reduction in the number of times they use the bathroom in a 24-hour period. For many OAB sufferers, this means they can return to normal daily activities without the fear of not being near a bathroom.

"Sharon had such great results that we both felt she should move forward with the implant," says Dr. Howard. The implant worked out very well for Sharon.

"I have my life back!" she reports. "I can wear what I want to wear and do what I want to do without worrying about whether or not I'm going to need to use the bathroom." ■ — *Beth Chunn*