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18/MHS02/122

Nursing 200level

PHS 212- physiology

Question: Write a short note on micturition.

Micturition or urination is the process of expelling urine from the bladder. This act is also known as voiding of the bladder. The excretory system in humans includes a pair of kidneys, two ureters, a urinary bladder and a urethra. The kidneys filter the urine and it is transported to the urinary bladder via the ureters where it is stored till its expulsion. The process of micturition is regulated by the nervous system and the muscles of the bladder and urethra. The urinary bladder can store around 350-400ml of urine before it expels it out. The urinary bladder has two distinct stages or phases:

* Resting or filling stage

* Voiding stage

Resting or Filling Stage

It is in this phase of the bladder that the urine is transported from the kidneys via the ureters into the bladder. The ureters are thin muscular tubes that arise from each of the kidneys and extend downwards where they enter the bladder obliquely. The oblique placement of the ureters in the bladder wall serves a very important function. The opening of the ureter into the urinary bladder is not guarded by any sphincter or muscle. Therefore, this oblique nature of opening prevents the urine from re-entering the ureters. At the same time, the main muscle of the urinary bladder, the detrusor muscle, is relaxing allowing the bladder to distend and accommodate more urine.

Voiding Stage

During this stage, both the urinary bladder and the urethra come into play together. The detrusor muscle of the urinary bladder which was relaxing so far starts to contract once the bladder's storage capacity is reached. The urethra is controlled by two sets of muscles: The internal and external urethral sphincters. The internal sphincter is a smooth muscle whereas the external one is skeletal. Both these sphincters are in a contracted state during the filling stage.

When the volume of urine in the bladder reaches about 250ml, stretch receptors in the bladder walls are stimulated and excite sensory parasympathetic fibres which relay information to the sacral area of the spine. This information is integrated in the spine and relayed to two

different sets of neurones. Parasympathetic motor neurones are excited and act to contract the detrusor muscles in the bladder so that bladder pressure increases and the internal sphincter opens. At the same time, somatic motor neurones supplying the external sphincter via the pudendal nerve are inhibited, allowing the external sphincter to open and urine to flow out, assisted by gravity. Children and adults have considerable control over when and where they pass urine. They can also increase or decrease the rate of flow and even stop and start again, so micturition is clearly more than just a simple reflex. This control is learnt in infancy and involves other sensory fibres in the bladder wall. These fibres convey information on the degree of bladder fullness via the spine to the higher centres of the brain, the thalamus and cerebral cortex. This causes us to become aware that we need to pass urine and of the urgency of the situation. These links between the spine and cerebral cortex are not established until about two years of age and it is suggested that toilet-training is therefore not physiologically possible until that time.

The brain is able to override the micturition reflex by inhibiting the parasympathetic motor nerve fibres to the bladder and reinforcing contraction of the external sphincter, the internal sphincter will not open until the external sphincter does.

The increase in bladder volume increases stretch receptor and nerve activity, making the sensation of pressure more acute. When it is convenient, the brain centres remove the inhibition and permit micturition under our conscious control. When the bladder contains about 500ml, pressure may force open the internal sphincter; this in turn forces open the external sphincter and urination occurs whether it is convenient or not.

Contraction of the strong pelvic floor muscles can stop urine in mid-flow. The sound of running also encourages micturition but some people cannot urinate in the presence of others, no matter how great their need. After micturition, less than 10ml of urine remains in the bladder and the cycle begins again.

Micturition Reflex

The micturition reflex is a bladder-to-bladder contraction reflex for which the reflex center is located in the rostral pontine tegmentum (pontine micturition center: PMC). There are two afferent pathways from the bladder to the brain.

Urine volume and concentration is regulated through the same processes that regulate blood volume. Antidiuretic hormone (ADH)—produced by the posterior pituitary gland—increases the amount of water reabsorbed in the distal convoluted tubule and collecting duct.

For normal micturition to occur we need:

- Intact nerve pathways to the urinary tract.
- Normal muscle tone in the detrusors, sphincters and pelvic floor muscles.

- Absence of any obstruction to urine flow in any part of the urinary tract.
- Normal bladder capacity.
- Absence of environmental or psychological factors which may inhibit micturition.