



Help for Children Who Wet the Bed

Nighttime bed-wetting is a common issue among young children. A child will learn to control daytime urination when he can sense a full bladder. This is typically by age 4. Nighttime bladder control takes a bit longer and is usually achieved between 5 to 7 years of age.

What causes bedwetting?

Your child may wet the bed at night for more of these reasons:

- The bladder is maturing more slowly than usual.
- The bladder holds a smaller amount of urine than normal.
- Genetics. Parents who wet the bed as children are more likely to have children who wet the bed.
- Low levels of vasopressin, a hormone that reduces urine production.
- Deep sleep that prevents a child from sensing a full bladder (this is still under study).

Should my child be seen by a health care provider?

Most children who wet the bed overcome the problem without treatment, but there are some reasons that should lead to a provider visit. These are:

- Needing to urinate frequently or urgently.
- Extreme thirst during the day.
- Urination (at any time) that causes pain or burning.
- Swelling of feet or ankles.
- Bedwetting is a new problem (child has been dry at night).

Bedwetting is rarely caused by a physical problem; however, your child's health care provider can perform some tests to determine if a medical condition exists.

Tips for You and Your Child

- Make sure your child empties his bladder at bedtime.
- Install nightlights so your child can easily find the bathroom at night. Use a potty chair in the child's room if the bathroom is too far away.
- Avoid using diapers, training pants or pull-up pants at home and especially if the child is 8 years of age or older. You may use these if the child is going to be away from home overnight.
- Use a waterproof sheet in case an accident occurs.
- If a wetting accident occurs at night, have your child empty his bladder before changing into dry clothes. Keep linens and dry clothes handy for easy changes at night.
- In the morning, ask your child to help you with additional clean up. Be sure your child bathes to avoid urine odor on the skin.
- Do not tease or allow other children to tease your child.
- Keep a record of progress. Offer rewards for longer periods of dryness. Decide together what these rewards will be.
- Manage the child's fluids during the day (more in the-morning, less in the evening).
- Help your child learn to wake up when his bladder is full. Children with small bladders cannot stay dry unless they get up to urinate one or more times every night, or urinate before they go to sleep.

Pretend waking him up when his bladder is full. Tell him to:

Lie on his bed with his eyes closed.

Pretend it's the middle of the night.

Pretend his bladder is full.

Pretend it's starting to hurt.

Pretend it's trying to wake him up.

Pretend it's saying: "Get up before it's too late".

Then run to the bathroom and urinate (pee).

Remind your child to get up like this during the night.

- Practice bladder training with children whose bladders hold a smaller amount of urine. Have child hold urine for increasingly longer intervals during the day. The goal would be to urinate every two to three hours rather than every thirty minutes.
- An enuresis alarm is a tool that can be used with children older than age 7. A sensor detects the first drops of urine in the child's underwear, setting off an alarm (sound, light, or vibration). The child should be taught how to use the alarm and what to do if it wakes him up (e.g., awaken, hold the urine in order to get to the bathroom, then clean and reset the alarm.) A basic alarm clock can be used to awaken your child every two to three hours at night to urinate whether the need is there or not.
- Medications are available, but should only be used after all other options have been exhausted.