

Bed Wetting

(Enuresis)



About 5-7 million children wet the bed during sleep. It's more common among boys than girls, and there are many causes. The technical term is Enuresis, and a common myth is that it is caused by drinking too much before bedtime. This isn't the case. It's also not a mental or behaviour problem, and doesn't happen because the child is too lazy to get out of bed to go to the bathroom. Children do not wet the bed on purpose or to irritate their parents.

Common causes include:

- Genetic factors (it tends to run in families)
- Difficulties waking up from sleep (overtired)
- Slower than normal development of the central nervous system – this reduces the child's ability to stop the bladder from emptying at night
- Urinary tract infections
- Hormonal factors (not enough antidiuretic hormone which reduces the amount of urine made by the kidneys)
- Abnormalities in the urethral valves in boys or in the ureter in girls or boys
- Abnormalities in the spinal cord
- Small bladder development

Bladder Control

By the age of 5 years, most children no longer urinate in their sleep; however, bladder control is achieved at different ages. Treating a child for bed-wetting before the age of 5 is not necessary and may even be harmful to the child regardless of how frustrating it may be to the parents.



What can a doctor do to help?

You can approach your doctor to gain more information regarding your child's bed-wetting. Your doctor will most likely ask questions regarding your child's daytime and nighttime bathroom habits, as well as how things are going at home and at school. Studies have shown that children who wet the bed are not likely to be emotionally upset than other children are, however a thorough check will be needed to adjust treatment depending on changes in the home. He/she will do a physical exam and probably a urine test (called a urinalysis). Most children are healthy; however, it is always a good idea to check for any urinary tract or bladder infections.

Treatments for bed-wetting?

If your child hasn't outgrown bed-wetting, you and your doctor may decide to look at some possible treatments.

There are 2 kinds of treatment: **Behavior Therapy** and **Medicine**

Behavior Therapy

This helps to teach your child how to prevent accidents.

Some treatments include:

- An alarm system that rings when the bed gets wet and teaches the child to respond to bladder sensations in the night
- A reward system for dry nights
- Asking your child to change the bed sheets with you when he or she wets
- Having your child practice holding his or her urine for longer and longer times

Medicines

If your child is 7 years of age or older and behaviour therapy hasn't worked, your doctor may give your child medicine, however they aren't a cure for bed-wetting. There are two types of medicine, one helps the bladder hold more urine, and the other helps the kidneys make less urine. They may however both have side effects.



Helping to solve the problem

Even though bed-wetting isn't attributed to behaviour, there are problems associated with it that can ease the problem. Bed-wetting can lead to behaviour problems because the child may feel guilt or embarrassment because of the event. Have your children take responsibility in helping to work through the problems, but don't make them feel guilty about something they can't control. Reinforce with your child that it isn't their fault, and don't punish the child when it happens. Tell them why it happens (maybe you were a bed-wetter) give them hope and solutions to the problem.

Tip for the week:

Tell your child that no one knows the exact cause and share all information you may have to ease his or her mind.