

# **A Guide to Bedwetting in Children**

## **Highlights**

Bedwetting is common in children and generally causes no lasting problems.

In most children, it gets better on its own.

Bedwetting can run in families and is also called 'nocturnal enuresis'.

Bedwetting can sometimes have a medical cause, such as constipation.

Treatment options include bedwetting alarms.

## **In This Article**

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## **What is bedwetting in children?**

Bedwetting occurs when children empty their bladder (do a wee) while they are asleep, wetting the bed. It may happen occasionally or every night.

Bedwetting is common in young children and generally causes no lasting problems. It can sometimes continue in older children.

Bedwetting is also called 'nocturnal enuresis'. It can run in families and can be upsetting for the child and stressful for parents.

## **Types of bedwetting**

Primary bedwetting - when your child has never gone for more than a few months without wetting the bed.

Secondary bedwetting - when your child has been dry for over 6 months and then begins to wet the bed. Secondary bedwetting may be caused by: a medical problem  
family changes  
an emotional event

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## **Why do some children wet the bed?**

Bedwetting can occur because a child:

makes a large amount of urine through the night  
has a bladder that can only store a small amount of urine  
is a deep sleeper  
is constipated

A child is more likely to wet the bed if either of their parents were bedwetters as children.

Bedwetting is sometimes caused by a medical problem, such as:

a urinary tract infection  
diabetes

nerve or muscle problems

Children have little or no awareness that they are wetting the bed overnight. They do not wet the bed for attention, and it isn't an issue with behavior.

Most children who wet the bed overcome the problem between the ages of 6 and 10 years.

### **When should I see a doctor?**

It's a good idea to see your doctor if your child is still wetting the bed at age 7 years.

If your child has not wet the bed for a while and starts to do so again, it's important to see your doctor.

Also see your doctor if your child also has problems with bowel or bladder control in the daytime.

### **How is bedwetting treated?**

Treatment for bedwetting is usually not recommended for children under 7 years old, as many children grow out of bedwetting on their own.

If your child has constipation, treating the constipation may help with the bedwetting.

Treatment options include:

- bedwetting alarms
- medicines
- self-help strategies

### **Bedwetting alarms**

Bedwetting alarms are the most effective treatment for children from 6 to 7 years old. They make a noise or vibrate to wake your child when they detect moisture. There are two types of alarms:

a bell and pad alarm  
a personal alarm

You can hire or buy an alarm - talk to your doctor about the different options.  
Your doctor can also discuss how to:

use the alarm system properly  
encourage your child to use the alarm

It can take 6 to 8 weeks for bedwetting alarms to work. Both you and your child need to be motivated to use the alarm system.

## **Medicine**

There is medicine that can help with bedwetting in older children. Medicine may be prescribed by your doctor if:

alarm therapy has not worked or is not suitable  
short-term improvement is needed (such as for a camp or sleepover)

Bedwetting may return when these medicines are stopped.

Sometimes medicines and alarms are used together to treat bedwetting.

## **How can I help my child?**

Here are some tips for helping your child with bedwetting:

Don't punish your child for wetting the bed.

Remind your child to go to the toilet regularly during the day and before going to bed.

Put a nightlight in the toilet and encourage your child to go during the night.

Encourage your child to drink plenty of water during the day and continue drinking in the evening.

Avoid anything that contains caffeine in the evenings such as hot chocolate, tea, and coffee.

Protect your child's mattress with a waterproof pad or cover.

There are underwear pads your child can use for certain occasions, such as school camps or holidays.

Be patient and supportive, and remember that it is not your child's fault. Make sure that siblings understand this too.

Reassure your child that this is a common problem and they should not feel embarrassed.

Be positive after dry nights and understanding after wet nights.

## **Tools And Assistance**

If you're looking for further support and tools to help manage bedwetting, here are some trusted resources:

**Bedwetting Alarms** These alarms are an effective treatment for older children. You can consult with your doctor for advice on which type of alarm might be suitable for your child. They can also guide you on how to use the alarm system effectively. Alarms can be rented or purchased from medical supply stores or online.

**Educational Websites and Support Groups** Websites such as the National Sleep Foundation and the Enuresis Society provide useful information and research on bedwetting, along with strategies for both parents and children. Support groups and online communities can also help you connect with other parents going through similar experiences.

**Behavioral Therapy** In some cases, behavioral therapies may be recommended. These techniques focus on establishing healthy habits and managing any emotional or psychological factors that may be contributing to the issue.

**Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT)** may be used for children who also experience anxiety or emotional stress.

**Medical Professionals** If you're concerned or your child is struggling with bedwetting, a pediatrician or child health nurse can help assess whether there is an underlying medical issue such as a urinary tract infection or hormonal imbalance. They can also prescribe medications if necessary and offer guidance on additional treatments.

**Books and Guides** Books like "The Bedwetting Cure" by Howard J. Bennett and other parenting resources provide tips, strategies, and reassurance for both you and your child. These resources often cover everything from practical tips to emotional support for handling bedwetting with a positive approach.

**Child Sleep Specialists** If your child's bedwetting is related to sleep disorders

or deep sleeping, consulting a pediatric sleep specialist may be beneficial. They can assess your child's sleep patterns and offer tailored advice.