



Bed-wetting in children

Bedwetting is a common childhood condition. It occurs when there is an accidental (involuntary) loss of urine during sleep. The medical name for bedwetting is nocturnal enuresis. It is important to know that bedwetting is normal in children who are under five years old, and the majority of young children will wet the bed at some stage. Sometimes it will affect children who are over five and occasionally, young adults. It is worth visiting your doctor to rule out any treatable causes, as there may be underlying medical causes.

How common is bed-wetting?

Bedwetting can be a disruptive and stressful condition that is thought to affect around:

- 15% of all children, though more boys than girls
- 45% of children, with one parent who also had the condition
- 75% of children with two parents who also had the condition.

If your child wets the bed, it is important for them and you to know that it is not their fault, and that they have no control over it. They should certainly not be embarrassed or punished for it and other children should not be allowed to taunt or tease them about it.

What causes it?

In all children the development of their bladder control and night time urine production is a slow process. Children who have good control during daytime may still require night time protection for some time. A child usually wets the bed because the amount of urine they



produce is more than their bladder can hold. The bladder then empties but the child is in such a deep sleep that they are not aware of it.

When will it stop?

Bedwetting usually stops when the child gets older this is because:

- their bladder capacity increases
- they produce less urine at night and/or
- they learn to wake up when their bladder is full.

In time, almost all children stop wetting the bed, often without treatment.

In the meantime!

To reduce bedwetting try:

- Limiting fluids before bedtime (but don't deny a thirsty child a drink).
- Use an alarm device that wakes the child as soon as wetness is detected. These systems have been successful for 75% of children if used steadily and consistently for three to four months.
- Getting the child to increase the intervals between daytime urinations (do not cause the child any distress) so that the bladder learns to hold more urine. Using a star chart or other reward system may help this technique.

In most cases, bedwetting improves without treatment. If it persists past the age of seven or eight, or if your child starts wetting the bed after a six month dry period you may want to discuss the problem with your doctor.



Parenting Forum
Parenting NI
Floor 2 Andras House
60 Great Victoria Street
Belfast BT2 7BB

If you or your child would like to talk to someone about any of the issues above the following organisations will be able guide you –

Parenting NI
Floor 2 Andras House
60 Great Victoria Street
Belfast BT2 7BB
Phone: 028 90 310891 Website: www.parentingni.org

If you would like help with any other family issue, please ring **Parenting NI** for guidance and support on **Freephone 0808 8010 722** or email: help@parentingni.org