

Bedwetting

Most children learn daytime toileting by about 3 years of age, but many still wet the bed at night until 5 years or later. Night-time dryness develops naturally as the connection between the brain and bladder matures. This cannot be trained like daytime toileting, or rushed.

Children stop bedwetting at different ages. While a lot of children are dry at night by the time they start school, many still wet the bed at times. This is normal. It's important to respond with patience, understanding and support rather than blame or punish children for something they can't control.

Why does bedwetting happen?

Bedwetting happens when a child's bladder fills during sleep and empties automatically. Children cannot stop this by 'trying harder'.

Common reasons include:

- the brain and bladder connection is not yet fully mature
- difficulty waking up when the bladder is full
- having a bladder that only holds small amounts of urine
- being constipated, which puts pressure on the bladder
- naturally producing more urine at night than other children
- being unwell, very tired or anxious.



Bedwetting often runs in families. If a parent or close relative wet the bed as a child, it is more likely their child will too. Some children may stay dry when sleeping away from home because they sleep more lightly, but wet again when relaxed at home. Others may start wetting again during stressful times such as starting school, a new baby, family separation or other major changes. This usually improves once they feel safe and settled again.

What parents can do

- Wait until your child wakes up dry most mornings before stopping night nappies or pull-ups.
- Prepare the bed with a waterproof mattress protector and absorbent bed pad.
- Encourage regular drinks during the day (water is best). It's important not to restrict fluids.
- Avoid caffeine drinks like soft drinks, tea or coffee.
- Keep a regular bedtime routine and toilet visit before sleep.

- Talk calmly with your child about bedwetting in simple, reassuring terms. Ask if they have any ideas that might help.
- Help treat constipation with fibre, water and healthy foods.
- Use night lights or a torch if your child is scared of the dark.
- Reassure them they are not alone and others in the family may have had the same issue.

While some parents take children to the toilet during the night, learning to wake themselves is an important part of night-time bladder control.

Star charts and reward systems don't work because your child can't control the bedwetting.



Supporting your child's feelings

Children may feel embarrassed, upset or worried about disappointing you.

It helps to:

- stay calm and kind
- avoid punishment, criticism or teasing
- help your child feel confident in other areas of life
- encourage independence gently but avoid making the clean-up feel like a punishment, especially for younger children.

When to get extra help

Talk to your doctor if:

- your child still wets during the day at school age
- bedwetting returns and continues after being dry
- your child is often constipated
- either you or your child feels very upset or worried

- you have other concerns about bedwetting.

For children over 7 years who still wet the bed, continence professionals can offer helpful treatments such as alarms or medication.

School camps and sleepovers

Children should be encouraged to attend camps and sleepovers. Teachers are experienced in managing bedwetting discreetly. Plan ahead, pack spare clothes and talk privately with supervising adults.

Bedwetting is common, temporary and not your child's fault. With patience, understanding and support, most children grow out of it naturally.



Note: The term 'Parents' in this Guide refers to anyone caring for and/or raising children and young people.

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