

BEDWETTING (ENURESIS) AND TEENAGERS

Definition

Enuresis, or bedwetting, is a very common problem in children and teenagers the world over. It is estimated that enuresis occurs among

10% of 6-year-olds

3% of 12-year-olds

1% of 18-year-olds

Causes

Physical causes are rare in teenagers; usually enuresis occurs in teenagers who have small bladders, which cannot hold all of the urine produced in a night. Additionally, they do not awaken when the bladder is full.

Expected Course

The good news: Almost all bedwetters eventually “grow out of it,” even without treatment of any kind. Avoid “treatments” that may have lasting harmful complications. The following suggestions can help teenagers learn to use the toilet during the night and stay dry.

HOME CARE FOR BEDWETTING

1. Determine the capacity (size) of your bladder.

Hold your urine as long as possible on at least three separate occasions. Each time, urinate into a container and measure the amount of urine in ounces. The largest of the three measurements is your bladder capacity. Normal capacity for young children is 1 or more ounces per year of age; for teenagers and adults, normal capacity is 12 to 16 ounces.

2. Bladder-stretching exercises

These exercises can help gradually enlarge the bladder so it can hold more urine. Waiting 10 to 15 minutes before urinating during the day can help the bladder to wait until you awaken from a deep sleep at night as well.

Hold your urine for as long as possible during the day. On feeling the urge to go, try to distract yourself for 10 seconds or so. Resisting the first urge to urinate is most important. Several times a week, urinate into a measuring container to determine whether you have maintained or increased your previous capacity.

3. Decrease evening fluids.

Limit liquids before bedtime (no more than 4 ounces during the 2 hours before bedtime). Everything you drink becomes urine. During the day, however, drink plenty of fluids.

4. Self-awakening program for teens with small bladders

Learning to wake up in the middle of the night to urinate can solve the problem of enuresis, even for a teen with a small bladder. Just before bed, try this exercise:

- Lie on your bed with your eyes closed.
- Pretend it's the middle of the night.
- Pretend your bladder is full.
- Pretend it's starting to hurt.
- Pretend it's trying to wake you up.
- Pretend it's saying, "Get up before it's too late!"
- Run to the bathroom and empty your bladder.
- Remind yourself to get up like this during the night.

5. Change wet clothes during the night.

If you wake up wet, get out of bed and try to urinate in the toilet. Clean yourself, and put on clean, dry clothing. Put a towel over the wet part of the bed. Take heart—the fact that you woke up at all means you are closer to being able to awaken in time to empty your bladder at night!

6. Establish a morning routine for wet pajamas and bedding.

When you wake up wet in the morning, rinse yourself and rinse your pajamas and underwear until the odor is gone. A wet bed open to the air will usually dry by noon, but the sheets may need to be washed a few times a week because of odor. Sleeping with a towel under your bottom can cut down on laundry; this too can be rinsed out in the morning.

7. Bedwetting alarm

These alarms are worn inside the underwear and buzz as soon as even a few drops of urine are detected. They have proved extremely successful in teenagers who are unable to learn to awaken using other methods.

8. Alarm clock

An alarm clock or clock radio also can be used if you are unable to awaken at night and cannot afford a bedwetting alarm. Set it for 3 or 4 hours after you go to bed. Be sure to place it out of reach, so you have to get out of bed to turn it off.

9. Drugs

Special occasions such as slumber parties, camping trips, or vacations may require extra help with bedwetting. Some people take an alarm clock to ensure that they awake at night. There are also some drugs that may help. One drug (DDAVP or desmopressin) decreases urine production at night. Another (Tofranil or imipramine) temporarily increases bladder capacity. These drugs can be dangerous if too much is

taken or if they get in the hands of younger family members. They do not cure enuresis; they only provide temporary help.

Call Our Office During Regular Hours If

- Urination causes pain or burning.
- The urine stream is weak or dribbly.
- You also have daytime wetting.
- Bedwetting is a new development.
- You are not better after 3 months of using this program.