



Get a life – finally! Help kids stop bed wetting

By Fred J. Reed, MD, North Basin Medical Clinics



Having a secret can be fun. Kids love secret hide-outs, secret handshakes and secret pals. However, there is one secret no child feels good about having – bed wetting.

Millions of kids over the age of seven, including teenagers, wet the bed. While parents may feel frustrated, or even blame themselves thinking they did a poor job potty training, it's important to realize that **no child, no matter how old, wets the bed on purpose.**

What causes bed wetting in older kids? There is a laundry list of possibilities including...

- Heredity. Bed wetting runs in families.
- Small bladder.
- Inability to wake up.
- Lack of anti-diuretic hormone that helps the kidneys stop making urine at night.
- Slow nervous system development – the brain is unable to recognize a full bladder or a child feels empty after urination when there is still a significant amount of urine in the bladder.
- Abnormalities in the urinary tract or spinal cord.
- Type 1 diabetes. Accompanying symptoms include chronic thirst, passing large amounts of urine during the day, fatigue and weight loss despite a healthy appetite.

On the other hand, bed wetting is **not caused by** drinking too much before bed time (though this doesn't help), or because your child is too lazy to get out of bed. There can sometimes be emotional reasons, but generally, working through your family doctor to find possible causes and work on solutions is the first step. Some behavioral strategies that might help your child stop include...

- Going to bed earlier. Even a half hour makes a big difference. This is especially helpful for heavy sleepers.
- Limiting liquids after dinner. This helps those with smaller bladders.
- Encouraging the child to "double void" – go to the bathroom 15 minutes before bed time and again just before they hit the sheets. This works well for kids who don't empty their bladder completely, though they feel like they have.
- Waking the child during the night to go to the bathroom.
- Using a moisture alarm to wake the child when they are starting to wet.
- Bladder training. Have your child practice holding their urine for longer periods of time. This "stretching" exercise helps the small bladder hold more.

If none of these behavior modification methods work, medication may be the next step. You may be referred to a Pediatric Urologist who specializes in helping your family pinpoint the problem and work out just the right solution. But please, for your child's sake, seek help. Ignoring bed wetting in boys and girls seven and over can lead to low self esteem, isolation and behavior problems – and that's no secret.

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