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Treatment of Bedwetting

Bedwetting or enuresis is a very common problem. About 10% of six year old children wet the bed occasionally. Many wet the bed nightly. Each year some of these children will begin to be dry at night without any intervention. By age 12 about 3% will wet the bed and by 18 about 1%. Most of the time bedwetting is not related to bladder infections but is related to children having small bladders and being deep sleepers. Before the age of 5 or 6 bedwetting should be ignored. Beyond that age children can be helped to be dry by following these guidelines.

- Encourage extra fluids during the day. This will help to stretch a small bladder.
- Discourage fluids after dinner. Allow small amounts of fluids such as with brushing teeth.
- Give positive reinforcement for dry nights. This can be praise, stickers, etc. If you want you can give a reward for a certain number of dry nights, such as a toy or book.
- Do not punish your child for wet nights. This will only increase their anxiety and will not help them to become dry.

Measure your child's bladder capacity. Have your child hold their urine as long as possible and then urinate into a measuring container. They should have at least 1 ounce of bladder capacity for each year of life. For example, a six year old should be able to hold at least six ounces of urine in their bladder. Measure this a few times and write down the amount.

Have your child try to increase their bladder capacity. When your child has to urinate have them hold it as long as possible. Try for an extra five to ten minutes. This will help to stretch the bladder. Then, once each week measure their largest urine volume and see if it is increased. Each extra ounce of bladder capacity can help your child to stay dry for one extra hour at night.

Help your child to improve control over the muscles which control urination. This can be done by performing Kegel exercises. These are done in children by having them stop and start their urinary stream many times while urinating. Have them do this each time that they urinate. This will give them greater control over stopping the urinary stream which will allow them to stop the flow of urine if they start to urinate during the night.

By following the above guidelines many children will become dry at night. If this does not work the next step would be to use a bedwetting alarm. These alarms are attached to the underwear and will wake your child at the first sign of moisture. The alarms are helpful in half to three quarters of bedwetting children.

If after using the alarm for a few months your child is still not dry, there is a medication that can be used at night to decrease the production of urine. This is very effective and appears to be safe but many children will start wetting the bed again soon after the medication is stopped.

Bedwetting can be embarrassing for children. With proper encouragement and time, children can gain the confidence necessary to eliminate this potential source of embarrassment.