

# BEDWETTING BRIEF

Useful Techniques for Treating Enuresis

Volume 2, No. 1



## Daytime Wetting: What you can do about this problem

Daytime wetting in children over age 4 or 5 is a frustrating and time consuming problem for many families. Daytime wetting is more common in girls than in boys and nighttime bedwetting is twice as prevalent in boys. Daytime wetting was found to have occurred more than once a week in 3% of girls with the mean age of 5.9 years.<sup>1</sup> Children with daytime wetting may have frequent urination, have urgent urination, or dribble after urinating.

**Causes for daytime wetting, or leaking, are quite varied.** They include:

- Incomplete emptying of the bladder
- Irritable bladder
- Constipation
- Urinary tract infection
- Urgency (not “making it” to the bathroom in time)
- Anatomic abnormality
- Poor toileting habits
- Small bladder capacity

The list is quite long. In most cases, ruling out conditions that need specific treatment is a good place

to begin. Start with a voiding history and physical exam, as well as a urinalysis and culture. Other tests may be warranted, based on the history.

Major changes in the management of daytime wetting came about in the 1990s. In most current programs, non-invasive treatments incorporate hydration, **timed voiding**, correction of constipation and management of hygiene issues. These conservative interventions have been successful in correcting daytime wetting in many children.<sup>2</sup> If there is no improvement within three months of starting these interventions, a referral to a pediatric urologist or specialist may be warranted.

### **Timed voiding means that the bladder is emptied on a regular basis.**

In theory, timed voiding seems relatively simple. In reality, however, remembering to do an activity every two hours without a reminder is difficult. Watches that can be programmed to vibrate at regular intervals of time are an integral part of implementing any timed reminder program.

When you're dealing with children who have little concept of time, timed reminders are even more

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### *Helpful hints in implementing a timed voiding program:*

- Use a **vibratory reminder watch**. Conversely, a noise-making watch can be disruptive to the other children and will draw unnecessary attention to the child. Plus, beeping watches are also easy to ignore, especially in a noisy environment. A vibrating reminder watch is a better option.
- **Recommend that parents examine their child's daytime schedule.** Avoid setting times that are impossible to follow. For example, it would be

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*Daytime Wetting (continued)*

difficult to institute. Once children start school, most of their waking hours are not spent with the parent. It's unrealistic to expect a teacher who has more than 20 children in her/his care to provide regular reminders to a single child to urinate every two hours. However, most teachers are quite willing to cooperate with a timed voiding program once they understand that it will help the child maintain daytime dryness.

More than 90% of children with daytime wetting do improve, due to maturation or a specific treatment regimen. Recommending a timed voiding program

and the necessary tools to be successful will assist your families by providing a concrete plan to handle this frustrating problem.

Vibratory watches are not readily found in retail stores so it would be helpful for your patients to know that a good resource is at [bedwettingstore.com](http://bedwettingstore.com). A complete line of vibratory watches and pagers can be found here.

1. Sureshkumar P, Craig JC, Roy LP et al. Daytime urinary incontinence in primary school children: a population-based survey. *J Pediatr* 2000;137:814-8.

2. McKenna, P. Voiding Dysfunction Non-Neurogenic. Presentation at AAP 2004 National Conference.

*Helpful hints (continued)*

impossible to follow the reminder if the child is on the bus, coming home from school. By the time she walks in the door, she will have forgotten about the message and wetting is likely to occur. A much better time to be reminded would be as she is packing up her things before leaving school.

- **When using an interval watch, have parents carefully think through the exact intervals to be programmed in.** Even though you recommend a 2-hour schedule, if an interval of 1 hour and 55 minutes or an interval of 2 hours and 5 minutes is a better schedule for the child, there is no harm in making this adjustment.
- **A watch that can be programmed with specific times, rather than intervals, may be preferable.** If lunch is at 11:55, voiding before lunch at 11:50 makes sense.
- **If the child can know, independently, when the voiding should occur, he/she can discreetly excuse themselves to the bathroom using a pre-arranged method that by-passes getting a hall pass or signaling the teacher.** Usually, a meeting with the teacher or a note explaining the purpose of the timed voiding program is helpful, as is providing an indication of the actual times they can expect the child to be up using the bathroom.
- **The watch should be used seven days a week.** Learning a new behavior is more effective if it is consistently reinforced.

- **Initially, a reward or token-system for following the watch's directive (going to the bathroom when the watch vibrates) may be an added incentive.** Reward following the directive first, then reward achieving dry underwear, which will happen later.
- **Remind the child they should use the bathroom when their watch reminds them,** even if they don't feel that the urge to urinate.
- **Setting a reminder for a scheduled time to sit on the potty to have a bowel movement** may be helpful, since constipation and daytime wetting often occur simultaneously. Parents can be asked to record stools for a week or two and report back to you. Adding dietary fiber and/or a stool softener may be necessary to insure a regular soft stool.
- **Children should not rush through toileting.** Children who rush often do not empty their bladder completely.
- **Voiding posture is important.** Girls should sit with their legs spread apart so that urine can flow freely. Small children need to have a stool beneath their feet to support them.
- **Use the watch several months past the time that you think the problem has been resolved.** One nice thing about a reminder watch is that it can be used as a regular wristwatch once the child toilets at regular intervals without the reminder.

*Bedwetting Brief is written by Renee Mercer, Certified Pediatric Nurse Practitioner and author of Seven Steps to Nighttime Dryness.*