Bedwetting

Bedwetting or Nocturnal Enuresis occurs with approximately 15 - 20% of school age children between the ages of 4 and 16 or older. The condition affects 1 out of 6 individuals up to the age of 16, and it affects boys more than girls by about 3 to 1.

Incorrect, abnormal deep sleep is the primary cause of Nocturnal Enuresis. The bed-wetter sleeps abnormally deep, causing them not to respond to their bladder pressure when necessary. They can wet anywhere from once a night to three or four times a night, with some wetting only once a month or once a week.

Incorrect sleep can also produce tiredness or micro-sleeps which can translate into lack of concentration and ADD symptoms. ADHD symptoms can occur because the child is not getting the quality sleep they need and manifests itself in the form micro-sleeps or lack of concentration. Bedwetting can also be associated with other disorders such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD) and sickle cell anemia/trait.

Simple sleep-wetting in children under age 6 is so common that it doesn't warrant a special treatment program. Parents should discuss sleep-wetting with their child's doctor. A history, physical exam, and urinalysis screening are important first steps - and usually show completely normal results. Many hospitals have established clinics to help treat the problem.

As children grow older, the percentage who have primary nocturnal enuresis usually decreases. A child who sleep-wets is likely to stop eventually. The purpose of a treatment program is to make this happen sooner. Success can come as early as 1 or 2 months after treatment has begun. Some clinics stress changes in behavior, not use of medications. Other programs use the anti-diuretic hormone, DDAVP, that can be sprayed up the nostrils before bed. A buzzer alarm (either auditory or vibratory) can be an integral part of a program. A combination of these techniques may also prove effective.

It's important for parents to be supportive of a child with enuresis and to remember that the long-term outlook in most cases is excellent.

RESOURCES

WetBusters.com, www.wetbuster.com

For Parents: Getting to Dry: How to Help Your Child Overcome Bedwetting by Max Maizels

For Children: Do Little Mermaids Wet Their Beds? by Jeanne Willis