



## Children's Health

# Bed-Wetting

### WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT

By age 3½, one-quarter of children still wet the bed at night. By the beginning of adolescence, one in 12 boys and one in 24 girls still wets at night. The reasons for bed-wetting, also called enuresis, are unknown, although many theories exist.

Eight out of 10 children who experience bed-wetting have a parent who wet the bed after age 5. Bed-wetting is common in children with attention deficit disorders, possibly due to deep sleep patterns. Illness or bladder infections can also be the cause and will be accompanied by other symptoms, such as fever and a burning sensation during urination. In rare instances, bed-wetting can be a sign of a serious underlying illness. Children who have stopped bed-wetting can, in reaction to stress, start wetting again. Experts agree that with young children, waiting bed-wetting out is the simplest solution. Unless there's an underlying medical problem, bed-wetting often stops over time.



#### WHAT TO DO ABOUT BED-WETTING

- ▶ **Limit liquids** before bedtime and make sure your child voids his bladder just before bed.
- ▶ **Avoid shame**—Your child doesn't like to wake up wet; it's unpleasant, uncomfortable and cold. He doesn't have control over the bed-wetting, so shame will do nothing but damage his self-esteem.
- ▶ **Avoid punishment**—Punishment, like shame, will not affect the bed-wetting because your child can't control it.
- ▶ **Involve your child in cleanup**—Allow her to help change the bed. Be careful not to make this activity seem like a punishment.
- ▶ **Don't go back to diapers**—Use a plastic sheet.
- ▶ **See your child's doctor** about possible exercises and medication to help keep your child dry and to make sure there's no physical problem.