

## Night Time Toilet Training and Bedwetting Explained

Toilet training & issues around potential bedwetting are a huge transitional period for any parent and child. We asked Shae White of Conni to give us her expert rundown on the differences between the two, and some of the ways to deal with both areas of your child's development.

### Night Time Toilet Training

Toilet training is a complex process that varies from child to child and should not be confused with bedwetting.

The recommended age to start toilet training is 2 years of age. It can begin earlier or a little later, but around 2 years of age is the optimal time to get the process started. Ideally, night and daytime toilet training should be started at the same time; however it's important to note that your child will more than likely have to use nappies at night for up to a year longer.

Once you've begun, consistency is the key. Removing the nappy or pull-up is an excellent way to encourage toilet training as it allows the child to fully realise when they are weeing without the 'back-up' of a nappy or pull-up.

Going to the toilet before bed is a good nightly routine. Even if your child indicates they don't need to, or often don't want to, it's essential to get this habit started as it also helps establish many hygiene routines beyond toilet training – think teeth brushing. It's not recommended you wake your child during the night to see if they need the toilet. When a child is not fully/naturally awake they are in effect still weeing in their sleep. It's crucial for children to learn to hold larger amounts of urine in their bladder, and in time they will subconsciously recognise the trigger to go to the toilet and wake from sleep to do so, if they need to.

Some little things to help your child gain confidence regarding using the toilet at night is to make sure there is a night light, so if they do wake they feel more comfortable to call you, and dress them in clothes that are easy to get off if they do have a night time accident.

Use lots of praise and positive reinforcement in the morning. Don't be put off by little accidents. A negative response can prolong the process and can lead to increased stress, negating any of the progress you've made, and lead to anxiety around toileting. Try using a star chart or other reward system to record and reward dry nights.

Regardless of whether your child is progressing in a way you'd like them to, it's still essential to keep up water intake and avoid fizzy drinks – something I'd discourage kids to be drinking in the first place! It's also worthwhile decreasing liquid intake in the 2 hours before bed. If the process is taking longer than expected, resist putting your child back into nappies or pull-ups. Instead, protect their bedding with a waterproof bed pad. A child who wakes up during or after wetting the bed is developing the bladder to brain co-ordination needed for total bladder control. Simply remove the wet pad and put them back into bed. It's a good idea to have 2 pads so you can replace the soiled with a clean one. If your child does not wake up, the pad will absorb the urine and they can sleep comfortably until morning.



## Bed Wetting

If your child is still wetting the bed by around 4 years of age, you are dealing with a different issue. Bed wetting is a common problem in Australia, affecting an estimated 300,000 children over the age of 5, and is more common in boys than girls.

Prevalence of Bed wetting...

- 15-20% of 5 year olds (1 in 6)
- 7% of 7 year olds (1 in 14)
- 5% of 10 year olds (1 in 20)
- 2-3% of 12-14 year olds (1 in 30)
- 1-2% of 15 year olds and over (1 in 50-100)

There are a number of possible causes. Some children haven't yet learnt to respond to cues from the bladder in their sleep. Other children haven't developed enough anti-diuretic hormone (ADH) that slows urine production at night. Slight bladder instability can also cause leakage, and constipation can sometimes be a factor.

In essence, children who wet the bed at night both need to urinate at night, (some don't need to), and do not wake when their bladders are full. Many children who wet the bed are very deep sleepers. These are the only children who wet the bed.

Bed wetting is generally a family disorder. Almost half the children with this problem have a close relative who wet the bed. If there is a history on both sides of the family, children have a 70% chance of becoming bed wetters.

Some events may trigger a re-occurrence of bed wetting after the child has been dry for some time, such as the arrival of a new baby, a trauma or even simple changes to normal routines.

Whatever the causes, while it may be frustrating, remember: children do not wet the bed deliberately. Always give plenty of positive re-enforcement when dealing with bed wetting. Never reprimand your child. This is not a controllable condition, and a child should never be punished for it.

It's important to recognise that bedwetting is a developmental phase, and as the previously mentioned statistics highlight, it will pass for the vast majority of kids by the time they're 6. The key is to manage it in the most effective way with proper hygiene procedures like waterproof bed pads.

If bed wetting continues beyond the age of 6 or 7, we recommend you consult your family GP or a continence nurse located at most public hospitals or community health centres. Your health professional will ensure there is no medical reason for the bed wetting.

For further information phone: Continence Foundation National Helpline 1800 330 066

Shae White is General Manager at Conni.

For more info on children and adults continence products go to [www.conni.com.au](http://www.conni.com.au)