

ADDRESSING BEDWETTING

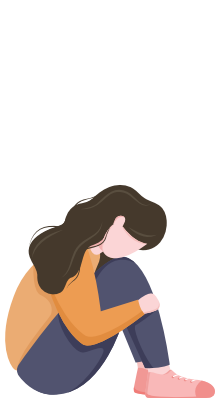
What's the Problem, Exactly?

Bedwetting, also known as enuresis, is a frequent occurrence among school-aged children and is the result of interactions between genetic, biological, and psychosocial factors. This is especially common in foster youth who are 2x more likely to experience it. Beyond inconvenience and frustration, persistent bedwetting can interrupt healthy sleep patterns and lead to other physical and mental health problems. These may include heightened anxiety/depression, academic troubles, partaking in risky/impulsive behaviors, and even suppressed immune systems.

For children in foster care, enuresis can exacerbate other challenges within the home, worsen psychological challenges, and put youth at risk for displacement. Addressing bedwetting in a way that is trauma informed and supportive to the child is essential. Doing so helps to improve the issue itself and ensures that related emotional challenges are not exacerbated in the process.



Bedwetting Causes/Risk Factors:



Trauma



Stress/Anxiety



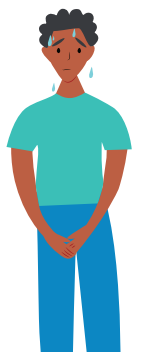
ADHD



Sexual
Assault



Developmental
Differences



Small Bladder
Capacity



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Strategies like limiting liquid intake before bed can be helpful, and may not be enough to achieve long-term success. Below are additional strategies to use.

1. Understand the underlying cause:

- Bedwetting can signify a medical or psychological challenge, and in some cases, it is an indicator of sexual assault.
- Look out for warning signs like excessive thirst or avoiding using the bathroom, which may signify a more serious medical concern.

Use a sleep log to track patterns and incidents of enuresis.

Try *"let's keep a diary of patterns so we can try to understand what happens on days when you wet the bed"* (helps them feel empowered) instead of "why does this keep happening?" (shaming and problem-focused).

2. Create consistent routines to help your child know what to expect

- Establish regular wake-up, nap, and meal times to promote a sense of structure and predictability.
- Be clear and consistent with expectations.
- Avoid punishments that use timeouts in bed/sending your child to bed earlier than usual.
- Do not reward by allowing them to stay up later than usual.
- Use visual timers and transition warnings.

Use fewer and more effective statements:

Try, *"It's time to get ready for bed. Let's go pick out your pj's"* (clear expectations, one step at a time) instead of, "Can you go get ready for bed?" (open-ended, room for ambiguity).

3. Provide choices

Use questions to give the child a sense of empowerment and control:

Try, *"Let's get everything ready for bed. Will you be my helper?"* (helps them feel important, valued, and part of a shared goal) instead of, "Go get everything ready for bed" (overwhelming, lacks clear direction).

4. Simplify clean-up

- Use a waterproof mattress cover.
- Plan ahead to reduce stress and involve the child in a supportive way.
- Keep extra bedding close by where the child can access, if appropriate.
- Minimize excess bedding so that there are less soiled sheets to clean.
- Avoid making this a shameful process.

Use encouraging language:

Try, *"I noticed you wet the bed. Let's clean it up together"* (clear expectations, empowering) instead of, *"Did you wet the bed?"* (accusatory, stressful).

