

informedhealthonline.org

INDEPENDENT, OBJECTIVE AND EVIDENCE-BASED

Interview: Bedwetting in children and adolescents



"Actually my son was never 'dry', maybe for only one or two nights a week."

Actually, my son was never "dry", maybe for only one or two nights a week. When he was dry for one night, I praised him and he received something special. When he wet the bed again, I had my doubts if he would ever be able to do it. I told myself to stay calm. I didn't want him to know I was so sad. It was a real burden.

There was no pattern. I couldn't say if it became worse or better during holidays or on weekends, in summer or in winter. It was just very variable.



Bed-wetting is a taboo topic. The doctors and psychologists did not help. I did not know whom to ask and who could help. There is no information in the newspapers or magazines about this. It is as though it just doesn't exist. You can't find out what causes it or what you can do about it. This is very sad.

At first I went with my son to the urologist. I wanted to know if everything was ok physically. I had no idea what was causing it. The urologist examined my son and said that there was no physical cause. After that I felt at a loss and didn't know what to do next. Then I went to a different urologist. And he said too that there was no physical cause.

I started to think about what the cause might be and I was thinking about my family. My husband's brother also wet the bed until he was grown up. I just happened to hear this by chance from my mother-in-law. A cousin of mine and my father's cousin also wet the bed. So I thought it might run in the family.

Then I tried different things to try to end the bed-wetting. I tried to wake my son. He sleeps very deeply. An hour after he went to bed I wanted to wake him. But it was already too late.

Then I tried to have him drink less. I gave him hardly anything to drink in the afternoon. In summer this was really hard for him, and I feel very bad about it now. By the evening I reduced the amount of fluids so much that he hardly had anything to drink. I thought if he drinks less fluid he would have to urinate less. But somehow he urinated even more.

We also went to a child psychologist. My son felt very insecure and was uncomfortable during these sessions. It was unpleasant for him. And things didn't change, so we stopped going there.

The doctor told me that there are alarm pads for children who wet the bed. I tried those. The alarm was pretty loud. Everybody in the house heard it and everybody was wide awake. We all slept badly because the first drop set off the alarm. Only my son kept sleeping. He always slept deeply. It was even very hard to wake him up. He just didn't notice it. And the next day he couldn't remember anything.

Another mother told me about the nose drops. Since my son wanted to stay over a night away from home I went to the paediatrician. She prescribed the nose drops and nothing happened. I don't know if it wouldn't have happened even without the drops.



My son was very shy. I noticed that it was very unpleasant for him that he wet the bed. Everything else in his life was ok. When he got older and went to school he always talked about "my illness".

During holidays he often slept over at his friends. Nothing ever happened then. But I couldn't sleep most of the time. I was thinking about what might happen, if he wet the bed there at his friend's place. I was afraid of what effect it might have on his friendships. I think that he didn't think about this at all.

Now we don't talk about it any more. We communicate by eye contact and gestures. Sometimes he comes into the kitchen in the morning, and waits until his brothers and sisters are gone. Then he says, "When you have time, would you wash my pillowcase and my sheets?" And I say, "Of course - I'll do it." We don't make a big deal out of it.

Sometimes it was hard. When I came home from work, sometimes I was very tired. From experience, I would always have spare sheets, especially in winter when it is hard to get things dry. I didn't boil the blankets and sheets every day, but I washed them every day if they got wet. It

cost a lot for electricity and water. I sometimes dried the mattress with a hair dryer and a steam cleaner. A steam cleaner is the best to get rid of the smell. After a while everything went smoothly.

In the last couple of years it only takes a few drops on the bedclothes ... and my son was turned off by the smell. He always wanted everything washed. When he was small, the smell didn't bother him so much. Now he won't put up with the smell at all. Everything has to be very clean.



I often asked myself what I was doing wrong. He was my fifth child and all the other children became "dry". Four children were dry but then I didn't manage it with the fifth. My paediatrician said that I wouldn't be doing anything wrong.

I still told myself that I would have to solve it. I had the feeling that I had to help him, and myself too. Especially coping with the laundry. That is a problem for me as a mother. With all those children there is always a lot of laundry.

Sometimes I felt very tired and I just couldn't take it any more, physically or emotionally. But then I looked at my other children and that helped. It helped me, that I love my children and they love me. That gave us all strength. We were and are always there for each other, and this camaraderie helped us.

Talking to other mothers helped too. It made it easier for me. Sharing the experiences with other parents who are affected might help other parents.



Parents should never punish their children, not in any way. I think it best just to love and protect the child. However, the daily routine can be difficult sometimes. It is stressful. You still have to try to be there for the child. The child should know that he or she is loved and is somebody special.

His father thought that the boy was to blame and that he should be punished. But I think force and punishment would not help.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

These real-life stories were gathered during interviews with patients who generously shared their experiences with us. We are very grateful to these interview partners. All of them have given their permission for these stories to be published here.

The opinions and comments in these stories are the opinions of individuals. They are not necessarily shared by IQWiG and are not intended to serve as recommendations to help people make decisions.

Sources

The German Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG)

The German Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG) was established by legislation to provide evaluations of the effectiveness, quality and efficiency of healthcare services. This includes the assessment of medicines as well as the publication of health information for consumers and patients.

Evidence basis of our health information

Our information is based primarily on systematic reviews of the effects of health care. Systematic reviews are necessary to gain an objective picture of health care. In order to do this, a clear question is formulated. Researchers then find all the relevant studies that could answer this question. They then evaluate those studies.

You can find a list of the evidence and other scientific literature on which this information is based at **www.informedhealthonline.org**

Disclaimer

This information was prepared and published by the German Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG). It is based on the evidence and other scientific literature available at the time of publication. The information is intended for the use of patients in Germany. It is not intended to for use to diagnose illnesses and the information is not intended to substitute for medical advice.