

Bedwetting alarms (page 1 of 2)

A bedwetting alarm can be used as an aid for some children who are wetting the bed at night. Two-thirds of children who use an alarm benefit from it, and about half remain dry after stopping using the alarm.

What is a bedwetting alarm?

A bedwetting alarm is a device that wakes the child who begins to wet the bed. It can take the form of a pad that lies under the child, which if it senses any wetness will set off an alarm next to the sleeping child. Smaller pads can be worn in pyjamas or pants with an alarm attached somewhere else.

How do bedwetting alarms work?

The sensors are very sensitive, and usually set off the alarm with the first trickle of urine. This wakes your child, who stops passing urine, and then should get up and finish off on the toilet. This stimulates your child to wake up and go to the toilet if he or she starts to wet the bed. In time, your child is conditioned to wake when their bladder is full before they begin wetting, or learns to sleep through the night without wetting the bed.

How is the alarm used?

You will be shown how to use the alarm when it is given to you. Use it every night until your child has had at least 14 consecutive dry nights. On average, 3 to 5 months is needed for this.

At first, it may be best for an adult to sleep in the same room as your child, and get up with them, as it might be frightening when the alarm goes off. However, when your child gets used to the alarm, he or she should take responsibility for getting up when the alarm goes off. In time, your child should also be given responsibility for re-setting the alarm after getting up and for changing any wet sheets or bedding.

Some problems you may come across when using bedwetting alarms

- Sometimes your child just turns off the alarm and goes back to sleep. With some alarms you can place the alarm out of reach so your child needs to get out of bed to switch it off.
- Beware of batteries running low.
- False alarms sometimes occur if your child sweats a lot at night.
- Sometimes, everyone else in the home wakes up but not the child

Children's Unit
Tel: 01722 336262 ext 2272



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You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

If you are unhappy with the advice you have been given by your GP, consultant, or another healthcare professional, you may ask for a second (or further) opinion.

The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

Author: Susie Macdonald
Role: SHO
Date written: July 2012
Last revised: November 2015
Review date: November 2018
Version: 1.1
Code: P11005

on the mat! This is unusual but, if it happens, wake your child so that they switch off the alarm themselves.

Will it work?

In children who are old enough to understand (from aged around five and above) and who are happy to use the alarm, there is a good chance of a cure. A cure would be defined as 14 continuous dry nights within 3 to 5 months of starting to use the alarm.

After initial success, the bedwetting may return at some point after the alarm is removed. If this occurs, a second course of using the alarm will often work.

Tips for success

Success is more likely in well-motivated children. Motivation is helped by giving your child responsibility for the system and praising your child for signs of progress.

Completely dry nights do not usually occur straight away. It takes time to gradually condition your child and their bladder. Signs of progress may include: waking and getting up to the alarm; smaller wet patches; the alarm going off later in the night or less frequently; a dry night.

You should not punish your child if there is no success. If there has been no response with the alarm after four weeks then it is unlikely to work for your child. Please feel free to keep in touch with Sally (on 01722 425275) if you would like to extend the use of the alarm or change to a different type of alarm.

Alarms can be used alone, or with other methods - for example, rewards or the medication desmopressin

Further help

ERIC – Education and Resources for Improving Childhood Continence
34 Old School House, Britannia Road, Kingswood, Bristol, BS15 8DB
Tel (helpline): 0845 370 8008
www.eric.org.uk