

# Bedwetting and Incontinence



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## What is incontinence?

Incontinence is the inability to control the functions of the bladder (Urinary Incontinence) and/or bowel (Incontinence of Faeces or Encoparesis).

Urinary Incontinence is a more common condition. Frequently it occurs only in bed at night (Bedwetting or Nocturnal Enuresis).

This can be caused by:

- During the early stages of development (e.g. in young children) there may be some loss of control due to over excitement, lack of forethought, e.g. not using the toilet before going on a journey, or to bed, or from fear in unfamiliar situations, e.g. camp. Temporary or occasional incontinence may occur due to an infection, or during a fit.
- A few young people suffer permanent incontinence as a consequence of damage to the brain or spinal cord, e.g. spina bifida or following an accident.
- Bedwetting may be due to a number of causes from stress to lack of training. Sometimes there will be no obvious or apparent cause.

It is very common in Cub Scout and Beaver Scout age ranges. Usually, there is usually no underlying cause and it will resolve naturally with time.

Individuals with incontinence can feel guilty and withdraw into themselves. They can be rejected by others and may be open to ridicule by their peers. They may become isolated and depressed or develop other unusual behaviours. They may be reluctant to take part in activities with others or refuse to go on camps or expeditions.

## Practical Tips

If it happens, don't make a fuss.

All bedding and bed clothing must be inspected and aired daily as a matter of course, without drawing attention to any particular individual.

A plastic bag or bucket with an airtight lid should be available for soiled clothing and bedding. Adequate washing and airing facilities must be available, also sufficient spare clothing and bedding.

Employ simple preventative measures, e.g. limiting drinks before bed.

Appropriate toilet facilities must be available.

Further discussion with the individual and their parents will identify:

- how independent the young person is
- how much help is needed and who will give it
- the source of supplies and medication necessary
- the facilities required for changing.

For simple bedwetting it may be possible to use short-term medication either in tablet or nasal spray form. Parents should be advised way ahead of camps to discuss this possibility with their doctor.

## What else do I need to know?

It is vital to supply support both emotional and physical to any individual suffering from bedwetting or incontinence. All adults involved must ensure that they do not make the young person feel a nuisance or dirty.

In some cases medication or further help may be needed to be able to control the condition.

Away from home, special arrangements should be made for the washing of soiled clothing and bedding.