

Why does my bladder leak during the day?



What is daytime wetting?

Daytime wetting (urine leaking during the day into your underwear and/or clothes) is a common problem for teenagers. Whilst most people stay dry in the day once they have learned to use the toilet in early childhood, some may continue to have wetting accidents. Daytime wetting may also develop after being dry for some time.

Many teenagers with daytime wetting have other problems such as bedwetting, constipation, faecal incontinence (leaking of poo) or urinary tract infections. However, it is important to know that daytime wetting and other bladder or bowel issues are medical problems. They are not caused by anything you have or have not done. There is treatment and advice for these problems.

Why am I wetting in the day?

There are different causes of daytime wetting in teenagers. The most common causes are:

- The muscles in the wall of your bladder tightening and 'twitching' suddenly. This can happen at any point during bladder filling. It causes a sudden, unexpected message that you need the toilet. This is the commonest cause of daytime wetting in teenagers and is often called overactive bladder.

If this is happening, you may notice that you hold yourself or crouch. You may not realise this means you need the toilet until you are wet, or you may get damp or wet on the way to the toilet if you cannot get there quickly enough.

- You get so busy with activities, or have sensory differences, so do not notice your bladder telling you it needs to empty. Your bladder may then get too full and is unable to hold on, causing wetting. Waiting too long to go to the toilet is sometimes called voiding postponement.
- Your bladder is not emptying completely when you go to the toilet. If this is happening it will refill quickly, and you may get wet.

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- If the round muscle at the bottom of your bladder and/or your pelvic floor muscle (shaped like a sling) are not relaxing completely when you go to the toilet you may not be able to fully empty your bladder. This is sometimes called dysfunctional voiding.
- Some teenagers find that urine leaks when they exercise, cough or sneeze. This is sometimes called stress urinary incontinence.
- Urinary tract infections (UTI) may irritate the lining of your bladder. UTIs may cause an urgent need to pass urine, needing to go more often than usual, pain with passing urine, blood in your urine and/or wetting. If you have new daytime wetting your GP or practice nurse can check a urine sample to see if there is a UTI. This can usually be treated with antibiotics that can be prescribed by your GP surgery.

There are other rare causes of wetting, such as having a problem with the nerves to your bladder because of an injury or illness affecting your spine (backbone), or because you were born with a condition that affects the nerves, such as spina bifida. Nearly all teenagers with these sorts of problems will have been diagnosed by a healthcare professional. They may need to use catheters to drain their bladder. If you are worried that something like this may be affecting you, speak to your healthcare professional.

Are there any other causes of daytime wetting?

Constipation:

If your bowel does not empty fully when you try to do a poo, then the poo that remains inside you can put pressure on your bladder and make daytime wetting more likely. Many teenagers need laxatives to help if they have constipation. Speak to your school nurse or GP if you think this may be a problem for you. There is more information about constipation in our leaflet [**A Teen Guide to Constipation and soiling**](#), and in the [**Teenager's information library**](#) on the Bladder & Bowel UK website.

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Not drinking enough during the day:

This means that less urine (wee) is produced. If this is happening often, the bladder gets smaller as it does not have to hold as much urine. This may then make daytime wetting more likely, as your bladder becomes less able to hold on to urine.

If you are not drinking enough your urine will also be very strong (dark yellow in colour). Strong urine can irritate the lining of the bladder and make the twitching of the bladder wall more likely.

Drinking things that irritate the bladder:

Fizzy drinks and ones that contain caffeine (tea, coffee, cola, chocolate, and many energy drinks) can irritate the bladder and make wetting worse or more likely to happen. These drinks may also act as diuretics, which means they cause the kidneys to make more urine (wee) than usual.

Is there anything I can do that might help stop the daytime wetting?

Regular drinks and toileting (bladder training) may help your bladder health:

- Try having a water-based drink every two hours. Teenage girls should have a total of between 1.5–2 litres a day divided into 6–8 drinks. Teenage boys should have between 2–2.5 litres a day, divided into 6–8 drinks. You should drink extra if you are very active, or the weather is hot.
- Water is best, but if you struggle to drink water, you could try sugar-free fruit squash. Avoid fizzy and caffeinated drinks. Tea, coffee, hot chocolate, cola, and many energy drinks contain caffeine.
- Ask your parent/carer to explain to school or college that you need access to drinks. You may choose to take a sport style bottle to use there.
- Make sure you sit on the toilet with your bottom well supported and feet flat on a step (for teenage girls). Teenage boys should try to sit down to pass urine once or twice a day. This helps with complete bladder emptying.

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- Try to pass urine after each drink and before bed (about every two hours).
- Make sure you do not rush when using the toilet. You should take your time to make sure you empty your bladder completely.
- Try to double void once or twice a day: When you have finished passing urine you should count to ten slowly and then try to pass urine again.
- You may ask your parent/carer to explain to your school or college that you should be able to go to the toilet whenever you need to. Many secondary schools will provide you with a medical card to allow you out of lessons.
- Carry some spare clothes, wipes to clean yourself and plastic bags for wet clothes. Make sure any wet clothes are taken home for washing.
- Teenage girls make sure you wipe your bottom from front to back. This helps to stop germs from the bottom getting into the bladder and causing infections.
- Try to prevent constipation by eating five to seven portions of fruit and vegetables a day. Tell your healthcare professional if you think you may be constipated.

There is an app called [**URApp**](#) that is designed to support teenagers with bladder training.

What will happen if I ask for help for daytime wetting?

Your healthcare professional may ask you to keep a diary for two or three days of your drinks, toilet visits (for wees and poos) and of when your urine leaks. This information will allow the nurse or doctor to see how well your bowel and bladder are working.

It is likely that you will be asked questions about how long the daytime wetting has been happening, about your general health, toilet training and medical history.

Is there medication for daytime wetting?

Medication is suggested for some teenagers. Always follow your healthcare professional's advice when taking medication. Speak to them if you have any concerns or questions.

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Anticholinergics:

Anticholinergics are medicines that help the bladder to stay soft and stretchy while it is filling. The medicines sometimes start to work within a few days but may take several weeks to start to be effective. Usually the anticholinergics are started at a low dose. Some teenagers may need the dose increasing to get the best effect from the medication. Anticholinergics often work better if you are doing bladder training while taking them.

Your healthcare professional will explain how the medication works, how much you should take and should arrange to see you again.

Although medicines can be very helpful, sometimes they can affect other parts of the body and cause things you may not want to happen. These are called side effects. Talk to your nurse, doctor or pharmacist if you think you may be having side effects from the medication.

Antibiotics:

If you have a confirmed urinary tract infection (UTI) you may be advised to have antibiotics. Some teenagers need to stay on antibiotics after the infection is better to help stop the infection coming back. Your doctor or nurse will explain if antibiotics are needed.

Is there anything else that can be done

If the wetting is not getting better, your healthcare professional may be able to refer you to a specialist service for more advice and support.

Further information

Find more information about bladder and bowel health in our information library at www.bbuk.org.uk. You can also contact the [**Bladder & Bowel UK confidential helpline \(0161 214 4591\)**](tel:01612144591).

For further advice on bladder and bowel problems speak to your GP or other healthcare professional.