Growing up and coping with Bedwetting... a helpful guide
You are not alone, many others have similar difficulties...

Most older teenagers and young adults who wet the bed have sought help as a child without success; some may have been too embarrassed to talk to a doctor or nurse. This leaflet reassures you that you are not alone and that, in most cases, something can be done to help.

What are the causes?

With most people their urine-producing system (the kidneys) shuts down at night, so they are producing less urine than during the day. But for some young people this does not happen - we don't as yet, know why! Bedwetting accidents occur when the bladder is full and the signal to wake-up and to 'hold-on' doesn't get through to the brain. For others, an 'overactive' bladder may also complicate the situation (the symptoms of this are often a sudden and urgent 'need to go' during the day).

Other factors might be

★ A urine infection - if you experience pain on passing water or if you notice anything unusual about your urine contact your doctor.

★ Stress, tiredness or anxiety

★ Alcohol - this stimulates the kidneys to produce more urine, so can cause a problem at night. (If so it may be best to cut down or avoid alcohol completely.)

Is this problem a common one?

Nocturnal enuresis (the medical term for bedwetting) affects about 1 in 75 young people aged 15-21. Some may only wet the bed occasionally, whilst others may have never experienced a dry night. Many young people feel so embarrassed they even hide it from their family and closest friends - and find it a barrier to forming close relationships. Washing sheets and bedding is also very costly and can be especially difficult when staying away from home.
What can you do about it?

1. Visit your GP or other health advisor
See your doctor, school nurse or local continence advisor, or if you are a student, your student health service. You may be referred to a specialist, who might carry out a simple bladder X-ray or ultrasound scan to make sure there is nothing physically wrong with your bladder.

2. Keep a Diary
Keep a diary or chart of your wetting pattern and any relevant factors such as foods, drinks or any particular stresses or worries - these can help you or your advisor to spot any potential 'triggers'.

3. Food & Drink
It is important to drink regularly throughout the day (a minimum of 2 pints or approximately 1.1 litres of water-based drinks is about right, but more when exercising or in hot weather), but don't leave all your intake until the evening. Perhaps experiment with amounts of tea, coffee, and cola which can cause more urine to be produced.

4. Self-waking
It may help to set an alarm clock and use the toilet a couple of hours after going to bed and 1-2 hours before your usual waking time. Try to vary these times a little to avoid getting into a habit of emptying the bladder at the same time.

5. Bladder Training
If you have daytime ‘urgency’ it might help if you go to the toilet regularly during the day and increase the intervals between using the toilet by a few minutes each week - to a maximum of 2 hours. Make sure you don't have a urine infection before trying this.
6. Medication from your GP

Dermopressin is a medication, in tablet or ‘melt’ form that causes the kidneys to produce a smaller amount of urine. Taken just before bed each night it will have an immediate effect if it is going to work. It can be taken long-term by teenagers & adults, providing you have regular (3 monthly) medical reviews. It is non-addictive and side effects are rare. But it is important that you do not drink anything after taking the medication.

Oxybutynin is a tablet that is sometimes prescribed for young people who have daytime urgency. It works by helping the bladder to relax.

7. Bedwetting Alarm or Buzzer

This is a device that helps prompt you when you begin to wet - so that you wake-up and ‘hold-on’. It can take 5-12 weeks to have an effect and it does need considerable determination and patience. But with the support of your local advisor, this can be a successful form of treatment.

There are two types of alarm available, the mini or body worn alarm and the bedside model. In both types, the ‘noise-box’ sounds when urine touches the sensor. There are also vibrating versions - which might be more suitable when staying away from home. Alarms can sometimes be obtained on loan, free via your school nurse, continence advisor, GP or hospital specialist. Alternatively they can be purchased from ERIC.

8. Complementary Medicine

Many people find methods such as hypnotherapy, homeopathy, reflexology or acupuncture helpful. Contact ERIC for the specific leaflet and further details.
Coping when you are away from home

Starting at college or going on holiday can be a daunting experience if you have to cope with bedwetting or other continence problems. Here are some handy tips:

★ If you have not already done so, see if the medication desmopressin works for you. If you are on a long-haul flight, be careful to take only one dose of medication within any 8-hour period.
★ Contact the place where you will be staying and if possible obtain a single room.
★ Find out whether there is a washing machine and tumble dryer available and ensure that you have sufficient washing powder or liquid. If not, take handwashing solution and perhaps a drying rack.
★ Check whether bedding protection is provided. If not, find out the size of the beds in advance so that you can take your own.
★ If you wear pads or use disposable draw-sheets, take a bin liner for discreet disposal.
★ Check the bathing and showering facilities. If these are limited, take moist wipes, soap and a flannel. You might also like to use a room freshener.
★ Don’t assume that other countries will have the same products that you use at home - if you wear pads at night, make sure you take sufficient quantities with you.
★ On long flights, remember to take enough pads, etc in your personal hand luggage. Try to book and sit in an aisle seat nearest to the toilet.
★ In hot countries, drink plenty of bottled water to avoid dehydration.

ERIC can always help you

ERIC is the national charity that gives information and support on bedwetting, daytime wetting and soiling in younger children and teenagers. Our experienced Helpline staff are always keen to listen and help, no matter what the scale of the problem.
Useful resources

Visit www.eric.org.uk, our interactive Website with message boards and information zones. With loads to do and see, why not visit the site soon?

ERIC's Website dedicated to supporting young people aged 13-17 years is at www.trusteric.org. It contains answers to frequently asked questions, a message board, access to a trained Helpline worker and lots of other useful information. Why not check it out?

Other booklets and resources are available from the ERIC Website shop: www.ericshop.org.uk, or from ERIC's Products' Catalogue. Tel: 0117 301 2101 or email orders@eric.org.uk

The Continence Foundation - The national charity that gives advice on all aspects of incontinence for adults. 307 Hatton Square, 16 Baldwins Gardens, London EC1N 7RJ. Helpline: 0845 345 0165 (9.30am-1.00pm, Monday-Friday) Email: continence-help@dial.pipex.com Website: www.continence-foundation.org.uk

Incontact - provides information and support for people with bladder and bowel problems. SATRA Innovation Park, Rockingham Road, Kettering, Northants NN16 9JH. Tel: 0870 770 3246 Email: info@incontact.org Website: www.incontact.org

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