

# ERIC's Guide to Children's Daytime Bladder Problems



Hi, we're

**WEE & POO**

You can read all about  
us on the ERIC website  
[www.eric.org.uk](http://www.eric.org.uk)



This leaflet is all about me and the **mischief** I can get up to  
in the daytime!

Do you go more often than your friends?

Are you often in a big hurry to get to the toilet when you need a wee?

Do your pants sometimes get wet?

This leaflet is all about bladder problems in the daytime, things like urgency, frequency and wetting. Wetting could be anything from a damp patch in your pants to a puddle on the floor. However wet you are, it's a big nuisance, and it can be really embarrassing.

Because it can be really hard to talk about wee problems you might think you're the only person who has them – but you're not! For instance, 1 in 7 children aged 4½ and 1 in 20 children aged 9½ suffer from daytime wetting. Most of the time the problems are functional – that means everything is in the right place in your bladder and it ought to be able to work properly – but it misbehaves instead. A small number of children though have an underlying reason for being wet, so everyone who is wet in the daytime should go and see their GP to get checked out just in case.

**Constipation**, in other words a bowel full of poo, can make your bladder misbehave. There just isn't space in your tummy for lots of poo to be stored and lots of wee! A full bowel can press against your bladder – that makes you feel like you need a wee or stops you holding as much wee as usual. It can make you have wee accidents in the daytime AND it might cause night time wetting too. If you're passing hard poo, or you're going less than 4 times a week, or if you have to push hard to get your poo out, or if you have problems with poo in your pants, check out *ERIC's Guide to Children's Bowel Problems*



It might be my fault

A **Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)** can make your bladder misbehave too. This is caused by some bugs finding their way into your bladder. They can make your wee a bit smelly or cloudy, and it might sting a bit when it comes out. You might have tummy ache or feel sick too. But some children don't have any of these problems – they just keep rushing to the toilet or getting wet pants, so it's always a good idea to see your GP for a urine test to see if you do have a UTI. If you do, they can give you some medicine to make this better.



Or mine!

# How does my body make wee?

In order to explain how bladders misbehave, we need to know a bit more about how they work!

Most of us have got two kidneys. They filter our blood and take out the waste products....that's wee! So they are like our wee factories.

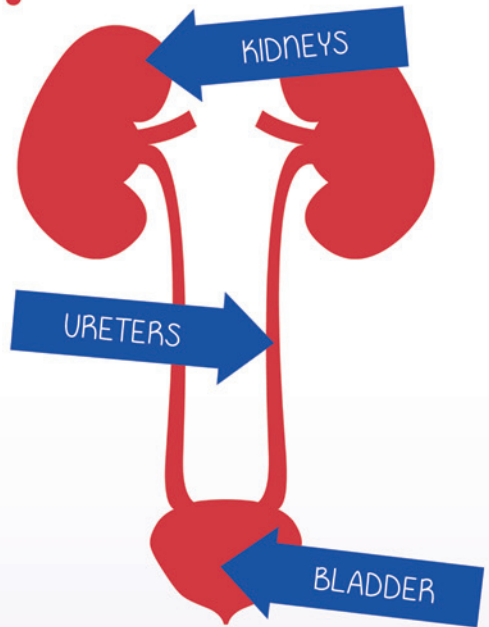
Long thin tubes called ureters carry wee down to our...

...bladder where the wee is stored. So a bladder is a kind of wee warehouse. Bladders are like balloons – they stretch to hold all our wee. When we go to the toilet our bladder muscles squeeze, and they should keep squeezing until all the wee is gone.

There are actually two sets of muscles to keep our wee safe – holding on ones like a tap at the bottom to keep all the wee in, and stretchy-squeezy ones in the balloon which relax to hold wee, and squeeze when it's time to empty.

Just like any other muscles in our bodies, bladder muscles need to be exercised to keep fit...especially the stretchy-squeezy ones. That means we need to fill and empty our bladders, and fill and empty lots of times throughout the day....so we need to drink and wee and drink and wee...

So....not having enough to drink can lead to an unfit bladder! And drinking the wrong drinks can cause problems too.



**Read on to find out how much to drink,  
and what drinks bladders love and hate!..**

# How can I make my **BLADDER** behave?

## The most important thing to do is to have plenty to drink.

We all need to have at least 6-8 cups of water based fluid every day. Choose a suitable cup for your size – about 200mls for a 7 year old, or 250mls for an 11 year old.

If you don't drink enough your bladder will get used to being small and it will tell you you need to do a wee very frequently! If you are not used to drinking properly, start with 8 *small* drinks every day, and increase the amount gradually so your bladder gets used to being stretched.

Spread your drinks out over the day so your bladder gets regular exercise – just like all your other muscles, the stretchy-squeezy bladder muscles have to practise to do their job properly!

You might find it useful to use a chart to help you to plan your drinks. And when you finish a drink you can earn a sticker for your chart! Have a look on the ERIC website [www.eric.org.uk/pdf-drinking-reward-chart](http://www.eric.org.uk/pdf-drinking-reward-chart)

## WHAT to drink is important too:

- Water is best.
- A couple of drinks of milk a day is fine as part of a balanced diet.
- Well diluted fruit juice or squash can be included.

## What drinks should you avoid?

**DEFINITELY:** Any drinks containing caffeine – like tea, coffee, hot chocolate, cola and some energy drinks.

**MAYBE:** Fizzy drinks, blackcurrant, orange, artificial colourings, flavourings and sweeteners...all these cause problems for some people.

Cut them all out for a while, then try introducing them one at a time to see what effect they have on your bladder.

## Thinking about emptying your bladder is important too!

The best way to empty your bladder properly is to make sure you *relax* while you wee – then the tap muscle at the bottom of your bladder can open fully to let all the wee out. So, make sure you're sitting comfortably and your feet are flat and firmly supported on a box or stool. Your knees should be above your hips with a secure sitting position – you may need a children's toilet seat.

Boys – you don't have to stand up to wee! Lots of boys find they do a much better job of emptying when they sit down. Try to sit down for at least some of your wees every day.



Children usually need to empty their bladders 4 to 7 times a day. We all need to listen for when our bladders try and tell us they need to empty...and we need to respond!

If you wait too long between wees then the muscles will be doing too much stretching and not enough squeezing! We need to do both at regular intervals to keep our bladders fit. If you sometimes forget to do a wee often enough, you could try using a special watch that alarms or vibrates when it's time to go. Have a look at the watches in the ERIC webshop.

If you empty your bladder too frequently it won't get used to being stretched. So don't make the mistake of doing lots of extra wees to try and stay dry!

## What else do you need to do?

You might be able to make your symptoms better just by working on your bladder exercise – filling and emptying the bladder properly throughout the day. But if that doesn't do the trick it may be because your bladder is a bit **overactive** or twitchy. This means instead of the bladder *relaxing* to let all the wee in, it squeezes when it shouldn't. You might need some special medicine to relax your bladder muscles. This could be called *Oxybutynin* or *Tolterodine*.



Some children have a different problem, when the two sets of bladder muscles forget how to work together to keep you dry. We call this **dysfunctional voiding**. The first step is to work on a healthy bladder by checking you're filling and emptying properly. But if that doesn't do the trick you might need to be referred to a specialist centre to have some treatment called *Biofeedback*. This is a way of teaching your bladder muscles how to do their jobs properly, for instance telling your tap muscles to *relax* while you do a wee.

## HOW TO GET HELP WITH YOUR DAYTIME BLADDER PROBLEMS:

There are special clinics for children and young people with daytime bladder problems. The clinics are usually run by School Health Nurses, but sometimes by children's Doctors (called Paediatricians) or nurses who specialise in kids' wee and poo problems (called Continence Advisors). Ask your GP or School Health Nurse who runs the clinics in your area. When you go, you'll be asked lots of questions about your wees and poos to help work out the main reasons why you have problems. Then you can choose the most appropriate treatment together. If your bladder doesn't get better after that you might go and see a special doctor called a Urologist. Look at the Flowchart – Daytime Bladders on the ERIC website [www.eric.org.uk/flowchart-daytime-bladders](http://www.eric.org.uk/flowchart-daytime-bladders) for information about what will happen.

## OTHER WAYS TO HELP:

Wetting is not nearly as big a problem if you find some ways to help manage it. Check out the ERIC shop on the website at [www.eric.org.uk/shop](http://www.eric.org.uk/shop) or call and ask for a copy of the Product Catalogue. You'll find special pants with a washable pad sewn into them, child sized disposable pads and lots more ideas to help you manage while you work on making things better.



The Children's Bowel & Bladder Charity

For information and support on bedwetting, daytime bladder problems, constipation and soiling and potty training call ERIC's Helpline on **0845 370 8008**

Email: [helpline@eric.org.uk](mailto:helpline@eric.org.uk)

Website: [www.eric.org.uk](http://www.eric.org.uk)

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### NICE Guidelines:

Nocturnal Enuresis: The management of bedwetting in children and young people  
[www.nice.org.uk/cg111](http://www.nice.org.uk/cg111)

Constipation in children and young people <http://www.nice.org.uk/cg99>

### Also in this series of leaflets:



If your child is of school age, they may well need some help at school. To find out what help you can ask for you can go to [www.eric.org.uk/help-at-school](http://www.eric.org.uk/help-at-school)

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This leaflet has been produced with the support of an educational grant, provided by Essity.



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