

# BED-WETTING

## INCLUSIVENESS

‘ There is a thin line that separates laughter and pain, comedy and tragedy, humor and hurt.’

- Erma Bombeck

The Aim of Scouting is to promote the development of individuals, enabling them to grow and take their place in society as active citizens. As we move forward with the Canadian Path we are much more aware of each individual’s personal progression, inclusive of their varying abilities. This inclusiveness within Scouting uniquely positions us to play an important role in modifying community attitudes and behaviour towards individuals with identified needs; it starts with Scouts.

Please use this guide for a better understanding of youth that experience bed-wetting; how as Scouters, we can make a difference through simple interventions, program modifications and knowing where to get help when needed.

## DESCRIPTION

Urinary incontinence or bed-wetting, also called nocturnal enuresis, is the unintentional discharge of urine during sleep. Although most youth between the ages of three and five begin to stay dry at night, the age at which youth are physically and emotionally ready to maintain complete bladder control varies.

## CHARACTERISTICS/BEHAVIORS

- Bed-wetting 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 no underlying cause and it will resolve naturally with time
- Sometimes emotional stress, such as the birth of a sibling, a death in the family, or separation from the family, may be associated with the onset of bed-wetting in a previously continent youth

- Sometimes bed-wetting can be caused by a serious medical problem like diabetes, sickle-cell anemia, or epilepsy
- Other physiological problems, such as urinary tract infection, severe constipation, or spinal cord injury, can cause bed-wetting
- Snoring and episodes of interrupted breathing during sleep (sleep apnea) occasionally contribute to bed-wetting problems; enlarged adenoids can cause these conditions
- Youth who wet the bed frequently may have a smaller than normal functional bladder capacity, may urinate often during the daytime and may wet several times at night
- May also be that the youth’s habit of voiding frequently slows bladder development
- Youth who wet the bed are likely sound sleepers and may be difficult to wake
- Daytime wetting, however, may indicate that the youth’s problem has a physical cause

## IN A SCOUTING SITUATION

- Insure for discretion when assisting the youth who bed wets
- Maintain the Scouter two deep policy when assisting the youth
- As much as possible strive not to have other youth become aware of the incidents
- Monitor for inappropriate teasing and bullying behavior
- Be empathetic, discreet, and supportive
- Consult with the parents to determine what works best for the youth
- Be aware, this is not a behavioral issue; demonstrate understanding and share words of encouragement
- Can occur with older youth as well and in the daytime hours
- Youth should be told by the parents that the appropriate Scouters have been made aware and will be there to assist the youth

For simple bed-wetting it may be possible to use short-term medication either in tablet or nasal spray form; parents should be advised well in advance of camps to discuss this possibility with their doctor



## **PROGRAM MODIFICATION SUGGESTIONS**

- Scouters should attempt to bring extra sleeping bags, pajamas, clothing, and blankets to each camp to be prepared for bed-wetting situations, particularly with the Beaver Scout and Cub Scout sections
- Restrict the intake of fluids a couple of hours before bed time, and encourage youth to void before bedding down
- All bedding and bed clothing should 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
- Away from home, adequate washing and airing facilities must be available for the washing of soiled clothing and bedding

## **FURTHER ASSISTANCE**

This Info Sheet is a resource guide only and is not intended to be therapeutic, diagnostic, medical, or legal advice. Our best source of assistance for youth with identified needs is the youth's parents or caregivers; the information provided is designed to support the relationship that exists between a youth and his/her parents or healthcare providers and the Scouters involved with the youth.

## **SOURCES**

<http://www.healthofyouthren.com/B/Bed-Wetting.html> and material adapted and used by permission of The Scout Association (UK), Scouts Australia, and Scouting Ireland.

