

GUIDE FOR PARENTS

How to use a bed-wetting alarm

Almost all children who wet the bed need to get up during the night to urinate. A bed-wetting (enuresis) alarm, which is activated by moisture, can help your child learn to awaken in time to go to the bathroom. The new models are light-weight and easy for the child to operate. Enuresis alarms can be used on any child from age 5 onward who wants to try one. On the other hand, they should never be imposed on a child at any age, even 12, if he or she doesn't want to use one.

What to tell your child

Give your child the following instructions:

- This is your alarm. It can help you wake up if you use it correctly. Remember, the alarm won't help you unless you listen for it carefully and respond to it quickly.
- Hook up the alarm system by yourself. Trigger the buzzer a few times by touching the sensors with a wet finger and practice going to the bathroom as you will do if it goes off during the night.
- Turn on your nightlight before you go to sleep or keep a flashlight near your bed so you can see what you are doing when the alarm sounds.
- Try to beat the buzzer. Wake up when your bladder feels full, but before any urine leaks out and sets off the alarm. If the buzzer does go off, try to wake up and stop urinating as soon as you think you hear it (even if you think you are hearing it in a dream).
- As soon as you hear the alarm, jump out of bed and stand up. Once you are standing and awake, turn off the buzzer by removing the metal strip from the little pocket in your underwear (if you have a Wet-Stop) or disconnect the clips (if you have a Nytone or Dry Night Training System) and dry them off.
- Hurry to the bathroom. Empty your bladder to see how much urine you were able to hold back.
- Put on dry underwear and pajamas, and reconnect the alarm. Put a dry towel over the wet spot on your bed. Remind yourself to get up before the alarm buzzes next time and review your plan.
- In the morning, write on your calendar DRY (no alarm), WET SPOT (you got up after the alarm went off), or WET (you didn't get up).
- Use the alarm every night until you go three or four

weeks without bed-wetting. This program usually takes two to three months, so try to be patient.

While your child is using the bed-wetting alarm, it's very important that he also practice a self-awakening program at bedtime. For instructions on teaching your child self-awakening, see the companion parent aid, "Helping your child overcome bed-wetting."

The parent's role

If your child doesn't awaken immediately to the sound of the buzzer on the bed-wetting alarm, she needs your help. You may need to be involved every night for the first two to three weeks. Here's what to do:

- Go to your child's room as soon as you hear the buzzer. Turn on the light and say loudly, "Get out of bed and stand up."
- If that doesn't work, sit her up in bed and run a cold washcloth over her face to bring her out of deep sleep.
- When she is on her feet, remind her to turn off the alarm. Don't do it for her. Your child must learn to carry out this step herself.
- Make sure the child is wide awake and walks into the bathroom before you leave her. If necessary, ask her questions to help her wake up.
- Your goal is to help your child awaken immediately and get out of bed when the buzzer goes off. Phase yourself out of the alarm program as soon as possible. Making sure your child goes to bed at a reasonable hour, with the radio off and a night light on, can help her respond faster to the alarm.

How to order an alarm

Alarms and parent information flyers can be ordered from:

- Dry Night Training System: Fisher-Price, Inc., East Aurora, NY
- Nytone Alarm: Nytone Medical Products, Salt Lake City, UT
- Potty Pager (silent alarm): Ideas for Living, Boulder, CO
- Wet-Stop Alarm: Palco Laboratories, Santa Cruz, CA

Health insurance policies sometimes cover these alarms when they are prescribed by your pediatrician.