

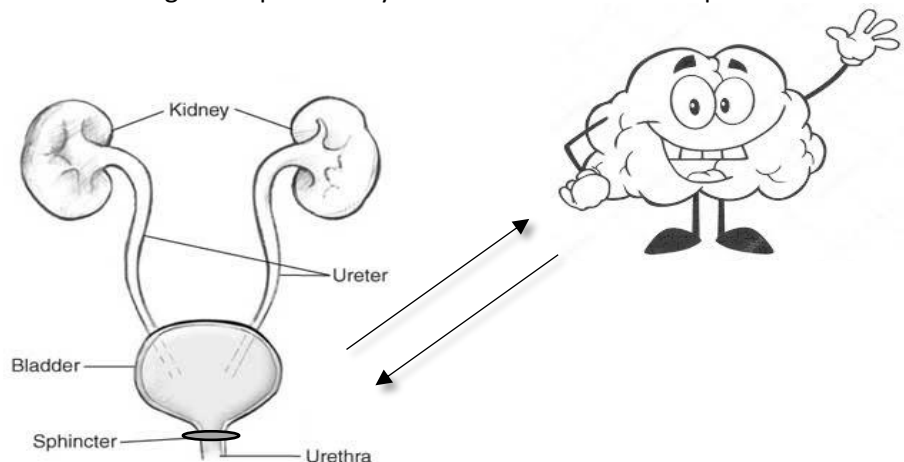
# Day Wetting and Bladder Retraining (tips for parents)

## How does the urinary system work?

The kidneys filter your child's blood and remove the waste products (urine). The clean blood goes back into the body, but the urine flows through tubes called the ureters to the bladder (Figure 1).

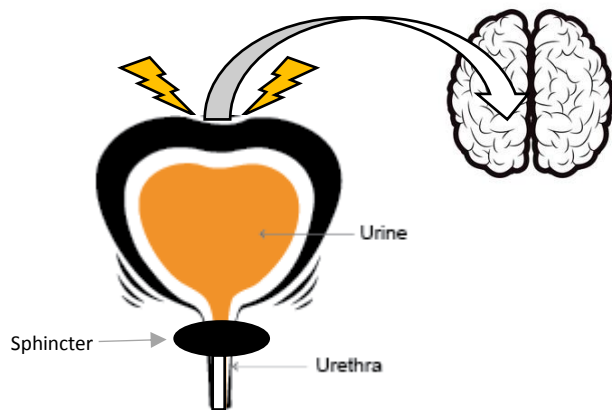
The bladder is like a balloon with walls made of thin muscle. It expands as it fills and stores urine. Sphincter muscles below the bladder act as gatekeepers – they close to hold urine in or open to let urine out.

**Figure 1.** Parts of the urinary system.



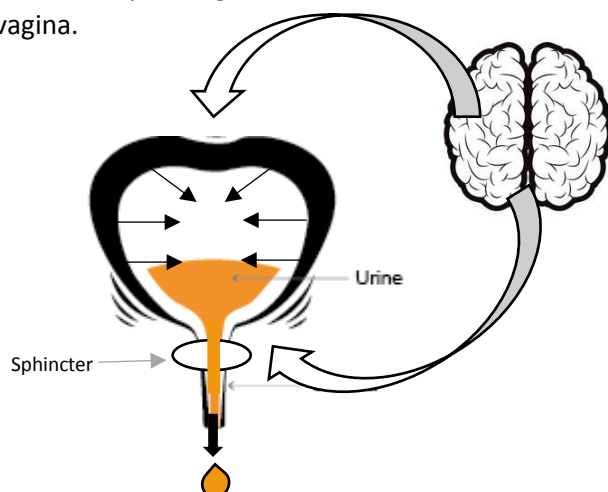
Nerves along the spine send messages back and forth between the brain and the bladder. When your child's bladder is full, a message goes to their brain telling them to get ready to wee (Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** Bladder fills. Sphincter muscle is closed. The bladder tells the brain that it's full.



During a wee, the pelvic floor muscles and sphincter muscles open and the bladder tightens to help squeeze out urine (Figure 3). Urine passes out of the body through a tube called the urethra which opens at a hole in the penis or just above the vagina.

**Figure 3.** Bladder tightens and empties. Sphincter muscle is open.



## What causes day wetting?

Day time wetting is when children can't control their bladders properly, so they wet themselves during the day. Some children don't realise they need to do a wee or put off weeing until their bladder is too full to the point of overflowing.

Other children have an overactive or unstable bladder that may tighten or spasm even when the bladder is quite empty, making them feel 'busting to go'. Children with this problem typically go to the toilet many times during the day and often wet themselves in small amounts.

A small number of children have a problem with the 'plumbing' of the urinary system – their ureters, bladder or urethra. For this reason, it's important for your child to be carefully examined by a doctor, especially if they are wet all the time or have problems with frequent urinary tract infections (UTIs).

## What can be done to help?

Put it Into Practice ✓

### Drink plenty of fluids



- Many children who wet themselves during the day drink very small amounts to avoid having an accident or needing to use the toilet.
- Drinking plenty of fluids helps flush the kidneys and bladder to keep them healthy and encourages your child to wee more often.
- **Your child's intake of fluids should be increased slowly, spread evenly throughout the day, encouraging a drink with every meal or snack.**
- It often helps to talk to your child's teacher about letting your child keep a water bottle at their desk and reminding them to go to the toilet regularly, such as during break times.
- **Your child should avoid drinks with caffeine – for example, cola, coffee, tea, and energy drinks.** These can increase the amount of urine produced and make the need to wee more urgent.

### Regular toileting



- Encouraging your child to go to the toilet regularly helps train the bladder. It also flushes out any bacteria which prevents UTIs.
- In children who don't realise they need to do a wee, it prevents the bladder becoming too full and leaking.
- In children with an overactive or unstable bladder, encourage them to go to the toilet at set times. This may slowly improve bladder control.
- **Encourage your child to go to the toilet on a schedule**, even if they don't feel the urge to wee. A good starting point is every 2 hours (or more frequently if required).
- For school aged children you can match the schedule to wee to each break time, before and after school, and in the evening before bed. Gradually increase the interval to 3-4 hours if they remain dry.
- Older children and teenagers may benefit from a '**reminder system**' – for example, setting an alarm for every two hours on a watch or smart phone.

- Eventually the aim is to let your child take responsibility for his or her own bladder control by relying on their own feelings of how full their bladder is, rather than reminders, but this may take some time to achieve.

### Create a relaxed environment



- **Sitting comfortably and relaxing while weeing** allows the sphincter muscles and pelvic floor muscles to also relax, so urine can flow freely. This takes co-ordination and practice.
- Make sure your child pulls down their pants, underwear and any tights or leggings completely to their ankles. Get them to sit back on the toilet seat, open their legs wide apart and lean forward slightly.
- Provide privacy while your child is using the bathroom and avoid pressuring them to finish.
- Allow 3-5 minutes on the toilet.
- Your child may be asked to perform '**double voiding**' if they have been found to not fully empty their bladder. Encourage your child once they have finished weeing to get off the toilet, wash their hands, then go back and try again to see if they can wee. This process is used to make sure the bladder is completely empty each time.

### Keep a record and stay positive.



- Bladder retraining takes time and patience. **Keeping a record of wet and dry days** can help monitor your child's progress as improvements may occur slowly.
- To have a record of the changes is helpful for you, your child and your doctor or continence professional.
- **Reward improvements** no matter how small with plenty of praise. In younger children, a sticker chart for dry days can help encourage them to stick to the new routine.
- Never punish your child for having accidents.

### Treat constipation

- Constipation involves the build-up of hard poo (stool) inside the bowel.
- This can worsen urinary problems by pressing against the bladder or making it harder to empty the bladder completely.
- Your child should aim to have a soft, large poo at least once a day. Some children may require a laxative medication to help with constipation. Speak to your doctor or pharmacist if this is the case.

### Other Resources:

<http://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/En/JustForKids/Body/Peeing/Pages/AllAboutPeeing.aspx>

(This is a helpful video explaining how the bladder and bladder retraining works, for you to watch with your child).