

# Sleepovers

Children often ask me what they should do about sleepovers. The answer to this question depends on several factors.

- Is the sleepover happening before or after you start the program?
- Do people outside the family know that you wet the bed?
- Do you want to go on sleepovers?
- Would you prefer not going on sleepovers?

One of the things I've noticed over the years is that children sleep away from home at a much earlier age than in the past. When I was a child, my friends and I didn't have sleepovers until we were 10 or 11 years of age. Nowadays, kids sleep at their friend's homes when they are as young as 5 or 6 years. Because bedwetting improves as children get older, going on sleepovers at a younger age means that more kids have to decide what they're going to do about these events.

Sleepovers begin when children ask their friends to stay over on Friday or Saturday nights. In time, kids start having slumber parties at which as many as 10 friends sleep over at a time. The next type of outing that children may get invited to are camping trips. They begin as 1- or 2-night events with a friend's family. As kids get older, they attend summer camps that may end with overnight trips. Children also attend sleepaway camps that typically range from 1 to 4 weeks away from home. For the purposes of this discussion, all of these events can be grouped together under the heading *overnights*.

## When Is the Overnight Taking Place?

Most likely you have already made some decisions about sleeping away from home. As you read the chapter, you can decide if what you've been doing works for you or whether you'd like to consider some other options. If you haven't gone on any overnights, consider finishing the program before sleeping away from home. Once you become dry, your confidence will go up and your first overnight should be a great success! Don't skip this chapter, however, because I include some tips on how to avoid going on overnights.

## Do People Outside the Family Know That You Wet the Bed?

This is an important question because it lies at the heart of how you should approach overnights—if you're not worried about having a wet night at a friend's house, everything else is easy.

Some people think you should be open about your bedwetting. They believe that keeping it a secret adds to your embarrassment and that taking a “matter-of-fact” attitude can reduce these feelings. Most doctors take the opposite position—they worry that you may be teased if other people find out about your wetting. If you decide not to talk about your wetting outside the family, there is **no reason** for you to be ashamed about it. Always remember that bedwetting is a medical condition.

## What to Do if You Don't Want to Go on Overnights

Do you remember how I mentioned in Chapter 1 that you're not the only one who wets the bed? I gave you this information not only to make you feel better, but also because it helps to know the facts. Well, guess what? Kids who wet at night are not the only ones who avoid sleepovers. As a doctor, this topic comes up with some of my other patients, as well. Here are some situations in which kids may prefer to sleep at home.

- **Eczema (EGG-ze-ma).** This is a condition that gives kids rashes on their skin. Children with eczema need to put medicine on their skin before going to bed, and they may not want their friends to see them when they have a rash or are covered with cream.
- **Sleepwalking.** This is a condition in which kids get up at night and walk around in a dreamlike state. They generally don't fall or get hurt, but it might be embarrassing to do this at a friend's house, and it could be dangerous in an unfamiliar setting.
- **Thumb sucking.** Most children stop thumb sucking by the time they're 6 years old. Some kids don't break the habit until they're older, and they may put their thumb in their mouth unintentionally after they fall asleep. If someone sees this, it could be very embarrassing.
- **Fear of the dark.** Some children are afraid of the dark, which makes going on sleepovers too scary.
- **Anxiety about leaving home.** Some kids don't like to be away from home. Either they miss their parents or they're just anxious (worried) when they are away. For these children, going on overnights causes a lot of distress.

If someone asks you to go on an overnight, you should have an answer ready so it won't look like you're fumbling around for an excuse. My favorite response is simple and direct—"I'd like to come, but my parents don't let me go on sleepovers." If your friend asks why they don't let you go, use either of the following responses:

- "When I go on sleepovers, I stay up late, which makes me very grumpy the next day."
- "I've got plans tomorrow and my parents told me I need to get a good night's sleep."

**TRUE OR FALSE:**  
In the old days, doctors  
tasted urine to see if  
patients had a condition  
known as diabetes.

**True**

People with diabetes have extra sugar in their urine, and doctors used to make the diagnosis by tasting their patients' urine.

Nowadays, we have machines that can do this for us. Thank heavens!

In my experience, this response works pretty well, and your friends should drop the matter quickly. If the invitation is for a slumber party, you can go to the party, but leave late in the evening before the other kids go to bed. For this to work, your parents should talk to your friend's mom or dad to find out when everyone is expected to go to sleep. That way your parents can pick you up as late as possible so you don't miss much. Your parents might even be able to bring you back in the morning so you can have breakfast with everyone.

There is one more thing you can do to feel connected with your friends even though you don't go on overnights—invite some kids to your house for “eatovers.” These can be get-togethers where you have a few friends come over for a special kid-friendly meal. After you read my ideas, see if you can come up with some of your own.

- A backwards meal where you eat dessert first and the food last.
- A meal where you eat everything with your fingers.
- A breakfast where everyone comes in his or her pajamas.
- A “dog” meal where you eat everything without using your hands.
- A meal where dessert is a treasure hunt. Buy a bag of Halloween candy and hide it throughout the house. Tell your friends they can find the candy by following clues written on pieces of paper that each child picks out of a hat. Make it a cooperative game so no one wins or loses, but everyone works together.

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## What to Do if You Want to Go on Overnights

As I mentioned earlier, if you don't keep your bedwetting a secret, going on overnights is easy. Your parents should talk to your friend's mom or dad before the overnight so they know about your wetting. When you go on the overnight, you should use Pull-Ups to get a good night's sleep and make your morning routine easier.

If you decide to keep your bedwetting a secret, going on overnights is trickier, but you can definitely make it work.

## Tips That Work for Any Type of Overnight

1. Try the medicine desmopressin before the overnight. If this keeps you consistently dry, you won't need to do anything else to make overnights a success.
2. Get a good night's sleep the night before you go away.
3. Try not to eat late into the evening and reduce your intake of liquids after dinner. This is different from my day-to-day advice (see "Drinking After Dinner" in Chapter 25 on page 174), but it makes sense to be extra careful when you sleep away from home. If possible, avoid salty food or drinks with caffeine that will increase the amount of urine you make at night.
4. Make sure you pee right before you go to sleep. When you're in the bathroom, take your time and empty your bladder completely.

## Nathaniel's and Keisha's Stories

Although I generally advise my patients not to tell anyone about their bedwetting, I occasionally hear stories about children who don't keep it a secret.

- Nathaniel is a 7-year-old boy who went to a slumber party with one of my patients. There were 6 kids at the party and when they got ready for bed, Nathaniel said to everyone, "I wear Pull-Ups at night and I don't want anyone to tease me about it." Nathaniel was not timid or embarrassed when he said this to the other kids. No one teased him at the party or at school in the weeks that followed.
- A few years ago, I saw an 8-year-old girl for a bedwetting visit. When I asked Keisha if she kept her bedwetting a secret, she told me the only person outside the family who knew about it was her best friend Vanessa. When Keisha was 7, she and her mom had a discussion about whether it would be a good idea to tell anyone about her bedwetting. Keisha's mom was worried that kids might tease her if they found out about it. Then Keisha's mom had an idea. She realized that telling one person didn't mean they had to tell everyone. So Keisha's mom called Vanessa's mom and asked her if she thought it would be a good idea if the girls had a "secret telling" visit at which each girl shared a special secret with the other. Vanessa's mom loved the idea because Vanessa sucked her thumb at night and was afraid to go on sleepovers. So the girls went to lunch with their moms and afterwards they told each other their special secrets. The experience proved to be wonderful for both of them. They had sleepovers with each other after that and felt a special bond because each one knew something personal about the other.

**TRUE OR FALSE:**  
Eating beets can turn  
urine pink or red.

**True**

However, this only happens to 1 out of 10 people, and the trait runs in families.

5. Kids usually bring sleeping bags to overnights. Sleep on the outside of the group so it's easier to get up and go to the bathroom if you need to.
6. If you use Pull-Ups, bring one for every night you'll be away, plus one extra in case something goes wrong. (I've heard of situations in which the elastic band breaks, making the Pull-Up unusable.)
7. Bring a sealable plastic bag for each Pull-Up you plan to use.
8. Consider telling a parent or camp counselor about your wetting in case you need some help during the night or in the morning after you wake up.

## How to Use a Pull-Up in a Sleeping Bag

Children sleep in a variety of bedclothes at night—underpants, pajamas, nightgowns, and extra-long T-shirts. In the warmer months, children sometimes sleep in the same shorts they wore during the day. Whatever you decide to sleep in, choose clothing that fits loosely because it will hide your Pull-Up in case you need to get up at night. For boys, boxers hide Pull-Ups better than snug-fitting underpants. For girls, baggy pajama “shorts” or nightgowns do the job nicely.

There are many ways that you can use a Pull-Up in a sleeping bag. The following method works best if you have a place to change before you go to sleep:

1. Before you leave home, put a Pull-Up inside your shorts or boxers and place them at the bottom of your overnight bag. Put a plastic bag in your overnight bag as well.
2. When you get ready for bed, put on the Pull-Up when you go to the bathroom to brush your teeth.
3. Get in your sleeping bag as soon as you put on the Pull-Up. (If you goof around with your friends, someone may notice what you're wearing.)
4. Consider having an adult wake you up around 6:00 or 7:00 am so you can take care of the Pull-Up before the other kids wake up.

5. When you get up in the morning, take your overnight bag to the bathroom. Remove the Pull-Up, put it in a plastic bag, and close your overnight bag.
6. Get dressed and begin your day.



## KID'S ALERT

If you plan to sleep in a bed instead of a sleeping bag, put on the Pull-Up using the method just described.

The following method works best if you don't have a place to change before you go to sleep:

1. Put a Pull-Up inside a pair of underpants or pajama bottoms and place them at the bottom of your sleeping bag. Put a plastic bag in your sleeping bag as well.
2. When you're ready to go to sleep, get in your sleeping bag and wait 5 minutes or so for the bedtime chatter to quiet down.
3. Take off your underpants and push them to the side of your sleeping bag. Reach for your Pull-Up and slip it on with your boxers or pajama bottoms. If someone asks what you're doing, say you had an itch and were scratching your leg.
4. Consider having an adult wake you up around 6:00 or 7:00 am so you can take care of the Pull-Up before the other kids wake up.

### TRUE OR FALSE: Urine is clean.

#### True

Unless you have a bladder infection, urine is *sterile* (which means that it's free of germs). Your mouth, on the other hand, is a cesspool of germs!



## KID'S ALERT

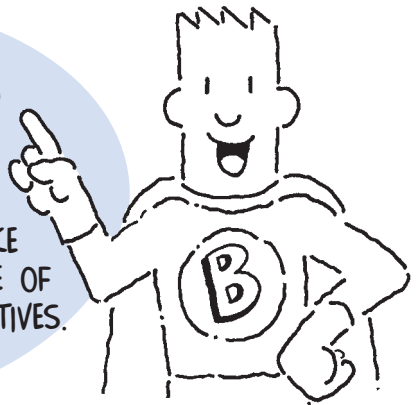
No matter what you wear to bed, make sure that you practice your sleeping bag technique before you go on your overnight.

5. After you wake up, remove the Pull-Up and put it in the plastic bag. Throw it away or push it to the bottom of your sleeping bag, whichever is easier to do. Put on your regular underpants and go to the bathroom to pee.
6. If you were dry, you can stay in your sleeping bag for a while before getting up. If you were wet, roll up your sleeping bag right away and tie it closed.
7. Get dressed and begin your day.

## Additional Tips for Going on Overnights

1. Invite a friend to your house the first time you have a sleepover. This will give you more confidence because you'll be in the comfort of your own home.
2. The first time you have a sleepover at someone else's house, make sure it's one of your best friends. That way if something goes wrong, you're in a better position to explain what happened without being teased.

HERE'S ANOTHER IDEA FOR YOUR FIRST SLEEPOVER AWAY FROM HOME—INSTEAD OF GOING TO A FRIEND'S HOUSE, HAVE A PRACTICE SLEEPOVER WITH ONE OF YOUR RELATIVES.



- When children go to weeklong sleep-away camps, they usually stay in cabins. Sometimes they sleep in beds, and sometimes they sleep in sleeping bags on wooden platforms. In most cases, there won't be a bathroom in the cabin, so expect to use an outhouse instead.
- If you go to a weeklong camp, store the Pull-Ups in a pillowcase at the bottom of your overnight bag.
- Going to sleepaway camp for more than a week is tricky because you need more Pull-Ups and there's a greater chance that someone will find out about your bedwetting. As a result, I usually recommend that you postpone longer periods away from home until you've become dry at night.
- If you decide to go to sleepaway camp, one of your parents should talk to the camp director to find out if they have a policy for campers who are wet at night. Many camps make an extra effort to help kids with medical conditions.

**TRUE OR FALSE:**  
It takes a man longer to pee  
if someone is standing next  
to him at a urine stall.

**True**

It takes a man an extra 5 to 10 seconds to start his urine stream if someone is standing next to him in a public bathroom, and the closer the person is, the longer it takes for him to start to pee!



WHAT'S THE BEST  
THING TO TAKE ON  
AN OVERNIGHT TO KEEP  
YOUR BEDWETTING  
A SECRET?

HARRY  
POTTER'S  
INVISIBILITY  
CLOAK.

