



Dr Wolfgang Muller (Consultant Paediatrician)

Parent Information Guide:

Parent guide: Using a bedwetting alarm

A **bedwetting alarm** can be a very effective treatment for children who wet the bed at night. It works by sensing the first drops of urine and sounding or vibrating, so your child learns to wake up, stop weeing, and get to the toilet. Over time, this helps them connect the feeling of a full bladder with waking up. NICE recommends alarms as a **first-line treatment** for many children with bedwetting once simple measures such as daytime fluids, regular toileting, and reward systems have not been enough.

Who is a bedwetting alarm for?

Alarms are usually most helpful for children who are:

- motivated to become dry at night
- able to understand what the alarm is for
- supported by an adult who can help during the night, especially at the start.

They tend to work best when bedwetting happens often enough to give regular practice. They may be less suitable if wetting is very infrequent, or if using an alarm would feel too stressful for the child or family.

Before you start

Before using the alarm:

- explain to your child that bedwetting is **not their fault**
- make sure they drink well through the day, not mainly in the evening
- encourage regular daytime toilet visits
- ask them to do a **wee before bed**
- check for constipation, as this can make bedwetting worse.

It also helps to practise in the daytime what to do when the alarm sounds. ERIC advises “priming” your child by rehearsing the steps, so they know what will happen overnight.



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How to set it up

Different alarms work slightly differently, so always read the manufacturer's instructions. In general:

- place the sensor in your child's underwear or pad, or use the mat as directed
- make sure the alarm unit is switched on and working
- have clean pyjamas and spare bedding ready
- consider using a mattress protector
- make sure you will hear the alarm; some parents use a baby monitor or a second sound box.

What should my child do when the alarm goes off?

When the alarm sounds:

1. **Wake your child fully.**
2. Help them **switch off the alarm.**
3. Take them to the toilet to **finish weeing.**
4. Help them change into dry clothes if needed.
5. Reset the alarm and return to bed.

At the start, many children do **not** wake up on their own. A parent usually needs to wake them promptly so the learning link is made between the full bladder, the alarm, and getting up to the toilet.

What should I expect in the first few weeks?

Alarms rarely work straight away. In the beginning, your child may already be quite wet when the alarm sounds. This does not mean it is failing. Early signs that it is starting to help include:

- smaller wet patches
- wetting later in the night
- waking more quickly
- fewer alarm activations
- more wee passed in the toilet after the alarm goes off.

How long do we use it for?

Bedwetting alarms usually need to be used **every night for at least 4 weeks**, and often longer. Continue until your child has had **14 dry nights in a row**. If there has been **no sign of improvement after 12 weeks**, ask for medical review.



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If bedwetting returns after your child has become dry, NICE advises that families can usually **restart the alarm straight away**.

Should we keep a diary?

Yes. Keeping a simple diary can be very helpful. Record:

- bedtime
- whether your child weed before bed
- time of wetting
- whether the alarm woke them
- how much urine went into the toilet
- whether the bed was changed
- dry nights. ERIC provides a bedwetting alarm diary and notes that this helps show whether the alarm is working.

Tips to make the alarm more successful

- Stay calm and positive.
- Praise effort, such as getting up, helping reset the alarm, or using the toilet before bed.
- Do not punish or shame your child.
- Use the alarm **every night**.
- Expect to help during the night at first.
- Keep the bedtime routine simple and consistent.

When should I get more help?

Speak to your GP or continence service if:

- your child has **daytime wetting**, pain, urgency, or frequent wee accidents
- your child is very thirsty, losing weight, or seems unwell
- there is constipation that is hard to manage
- bedwetting started again after **6 months or more of dryness**
- there is no improvement after a good trial of the alarm.

Key message

A bedwetting alarm is a treatment that **teaches** your child to wake to a full bladder. It often takes time and parental support, but it can work very well. The main ingredients are **motivation, consistency, and patience**.

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