



Dr Wolfgang Muller (Consultant Paediatrician)

Parent Information Guide:

Desmopressin for bedwetting (nocturnal enuresis)

What is desmopressin?

Desmopressin is a medicine used to help children and young people with **night-time bedwetting**. It works by helping the body make **less urine overnight**, so the bladder is less likely to overfill during sleep. It can be useful when a **quick improvement** is needed, such as for sleepovers, school trips, or holidays, or when a bedwetting alarm is not suitable.

Who can use it?

Desmopressin is commonly used in children with nocturnal enuresis, usually from **5 years onwards**, depending on the clinical situation and the advice of your doctor or nurse.

How is it given?

It is usually taken **once daily at bedtime**. If it is only partly helping after review, your clinician may advise giving it **1 to 2 hours before bedtime** instead. The dose should always be given exactly as prescribed.

Very important: drinks must be limited

The main safety rule with desmopressin is **fluid restriction**. Your child should have **no drinks for 1 hour before taking desmopressin and for 8 hours afterwards**. This is essential because drinking too much while the medicine is working can lead to **water retention and low sodium levels**, which can be dangerous. Children should still drink normally through the day.

Do not give desmopressin if your child is unwell with vomiting or diarrhoea.

Restart only when they are fully well and drinking normally again.



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How well does it work?

Desmopressin helps many children have **fewer wet nights**, but it does not cure bedwetting permanently. Some children become dry on treatment, while others improve only partly. Bedwetting may return when the medicine is stopped.

How long is it used for?

The response is usually reviewed after about **2-4 weeks**. If it is helping, treatment is often continued for up to **3 months**, then reviewed. NICE also advises a **break from treatment** when it is reviewed, to check whether it is still needed.

Possible side effects

Most children take desmopressin without problems. Mild side effects can include **headache** or **stomach pain**. Rarely, it can cause **fluid retention**. Warning symptoms include:

- severe or prolonged headache
- nausea or vomiting
- unusual sleepiness or drowsiness
- swelling of the face, hands, or feet
- unexplained weight gain
- very rarely, a seizure (fit)

Stop the medicine and seek urgent medical advice immediately if any of these warning symptoms happen.

If you forget a dose

Give it only if you remember **before your child falls asleep**. Do **not** wake a sleeping child to give it. Do **not** give a double dose.

When to ask for further review

Please contact your doctor, paediatrician, or continence nurse if your child has:

- **daytime wetting**
- pain when passing urine
- constipation or soiling
- excessive thirst
- bedwetting that started again after a dry period
- no improvement with treatment.



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Key points to remember

- Desmopressin helps the body make **less urine at night**.
- It is often used when **rapid short-term improvement** is needed.
- **No drinks for 1 hour before and 8 hours after** the dose.
- **Do not use it during vomiting or diarrhoea**.
- Seek urgent help for **severe headache, vomiting, drowsiness, swelling, or seizures**.

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