Wellness News Network™
Your Source for Health & Wellness Information
Issue 2, July 2016

# The Role of Chiropractic in Treating Childhood Bedwetting

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## Introduction

Childhood bedwetting, also known as nocturnal enuresis, is a relatively common phenomenon affecting approximately 5 million children in the United States alone, reports the Cleveland Clinic.[1] The Clinic also notes that, of individuals over the age of 18, about 2 to 3 percent experience nocturnal enuresis. This health problem, which involves the accidental release of urine during sleep, occurs with greater regularity in boys and commonly occurs even after children have been toilet-trained. Bedwetting, though not a serious health condition, can cause significant stress, shame, or embarrassment for the child and concern among adults.

In this edition of the Wellness News Network newsletter, we will take a closer look at childhood bedwetting to determine what causes this problem and how natural approaches, including chiropractic care, can help resolve it.

## Types & Causes of Bedwetting

The two principle types of bedwetting are primary and secondary nocturnal enuresis. Primary nocturnal enuresis, the most common form of bedwetting, is diagnosed when a child has reached the age where he or she should stay dry through the night but continues to wet the bed 2 nights per week on average, with no long periods of dryness. Secondary nocturnal enuresis is diagnosed when a child (who has wet the bed in the past) begins wetting the bed again after a dry period of 6 months or longer. In many cases, secondary nocturnal enuresis is associated with other medical or psychological health concerns.

According to the Mayo Clinic the true underlying cause of bedwetting is still a mystery but a number of factors may play a role, including small bladder size, inability to recognize a full bladder, a hormone imbalance, stress, urinary tract infection, sleep apnea, diabetes, chronic constipation and structural problems in the urinary tract or nervous system.[2]

## How Chiropractic Care Can Help

To those who are unfamiliar with

### QUESTION:

**Approximately how many children are affected by bedwetting in the United States alone?**

A) 5 million
B) 3 million
C) 1 million

**ANSWER:**
A) 5 million

### TRUE OR FALSE:

**Secondary nocturnal enuresis can occur after a dry period of 2 months or longer**

**ANSWER:**
False – 6 months or longer

### Finish this sentence...

**Bedwetting most commonly affects...**

A) girls
B) boys

**ANSWER:**
B) boys

chiropractic care, it might not be immediately apparent that chiropractors treat childhood bedwetting or that chiropractic adjustments and care may be helpful for non-spinal conditions. However, many young patients who suffer from bedwetting have been helped with chiropractic care. Some research studies (along with the clinical experience of many chiropractors) suggest that chiropractic care is indeed helpful for this health problem.

According to a 2009 case series published in the *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics*, chiropractic care was responsible for a 67 percent resolution rate of primary

nocturnal enuresis in children and teenagers with this condition.[3] Another study, published in the same journal, draws a similar conclusion: chiropractic treatment for primary nocturnal enuresis appeared to be an effective therapy in 46 children with this condition.[4]

A case study published in the *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics* states that lumbar spine manipulation was successful in resolving an 8-year-old boy's primary nocturnal enuresis, and that the resolution of his condition happened in a way that was independent of time or placebo effect.4 Another case study, published in 2010 in the *Chiropractic Journal of Australia*, notes that chiropractic care (spinal and cranial adjustments, specifically) helped eliminate bedwetting, asthma, and allergy symptoms in a 4-year-old boy.[5]

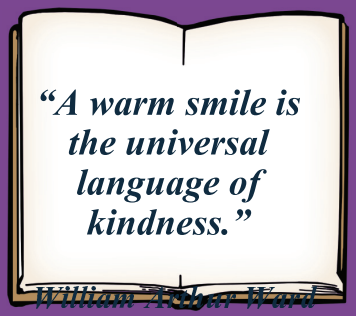
## A Holistic Approach to Bedwetting

A holistic, or comprehensive, approach to bedwetting involves first ruling out any major medical causes. Your child's environment, psychological well-being, toileting skills, medication and supplements are all factors that his or her chiropractor will take into consideration before developing a treatment plan to address the bedwetting. Other natural treatment and prevention approaches (besides chiropractic care), notes Dr. Ray Sahelian, a medical doctor and author, include restricting fluid intake before bed, using an alarm device that sounds when your child wets the bed and having your child assist with clean up in a non-punitive manner.[6]

## Considerations

Bedwetting can cause your child considerable embarrassment. This health problem may lead to fear-avoidance behavior, such as skipping sleep-overs, camping trips and other group activities because they are concerned about the possibility of bedwetting in a vulnerable situation. Your chiropractor can counsel you further on the merits of natural approaches to bedwetting for your child..

## Quote to Inspire

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6. Postles A, Taylor HH, Holt K. Changes in asthma symptoms and bedwetting in a four year old child receiving chiropractic care: a case report. Chiropractic Journal of Australia. 2010; Mar; 40(1): 34-36.

7. Ray Sahelian. Bedwetting treatment. http://www.raysahelian.com/bedwetting.html.

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