

Accidents Happen

By Glen Herbert

For parents and children alike, successful toilet training is a highly rewarding benchmark of childhood. The move away from diapers is a move toward greater independence for both parents and children. And there's less mess. And everything is easier. It's just a very good thing, and I'm sure you know exactly what I mean.

So it's understandable that any reversion (to use a polite term) would be disappointing. Still, many children will experience various forms of incontinence (more polite terminology) well past their fifth birthday. Bedwetting is the most common, though there are other forms as well. Not fun. Given that this happens at the same time the child is developing their social identity, emotions and frustration can run high.

Bed wetting is by far the most common form of childhood incontinence, and virtually all children are likely to some experience with accidents at night. The Canadian Paediatric Society notes that bedwetting is found in fifteen percent of five-year-old children, declining gradually to until 15 years of age.

Far rarer than bed wetting, yet also far more difficult to deal with, is giggle incontinence. You likely haven't heard of it, and it doesn't help that the name makes it sound a bit like a joke. For those who suffer, it certainly isn't. Known clinically as enuresis risoria, giggle incontinence can begin at about age five and last years. Children with the condition wet themselves when they laugh, fully emptying their bladder at each occasion.

What you can do about it

In truth, there is very little you can do about either of these related conditions. Little is known of specific causes, though we can pretty safely say that neither is the product of a single cause. Muscle development, emotional issues and concerns are likely key contributors. Unless the condition is extreme, your doctor will be reluctant to take any action beyond letting nature, and development, take its course.

The knowledge that bedwetting or other incontinence issues will resolve in time may be the only real comfort. Children can expect to gain full continence gradually over the course of a year or two. If a child experiences bed wetting twice a week consistently beyond the age of 5, then it's a good idea to discuss it with your child's health care provider. If giggle incontinence continues with regularity beyond age 6 or 7, then your doctor may wish to take a closer look at possible causes for the condition.

What not to do

It's easier said than done, perhaps, but above all it's important that your child not you're your own frustrations that may arise from their incontinence. It has been shown that the more a child is self conscious of their wetting problems, the more frequently it will occur and the longer it will last. So it goes without saying that reprimands of any kind are really the worst thing you can do, full stop.

Throughout, strive to be helpful and supportive. Noting that accidents happen to everyone not only offers comfort, but may also ease the condition somewhat. You also need to be aware that if accidents happen in public or at school, social issues will result. Playground culture can be

cruel, and it is important that you discuss that with your child, letting them know that you are also willing to listen to their frustrations.

My grandfather liked to note that no one goes to university in diapers. What I think he meant was that, while it can be hard to have a long view, sometimes you need to remind yourself that many of the frustrations of childhood resolve in time and fade in memory. With incontinence issues, that's probably a good thing to remember.