

Raising Awareness of Bladder and Bowel Problems for Teen Health Week

March 16, 2018 | Natasha Bolger | General



This blog post has been written by Davina Richardson in relation to Teen Health Week. The awareness week runs from Monday 19th March – Friday 23rd March.

Bladder and bowel problems are common in people of all ages, but are rarely discussed. This increases embarrassment and anxiety and makes it more difficult for teenagers to ask for help. For some, wetting or dribbling of urine during the day, bedwetting, constipation and soiling (leakage of poo into the pants) has been a problem throughout their childhood. If this is the case, there can be a feeling that nothing can be done to help.

We know that about 900 000 children and young people have problems with their bladder or bowel.

Some teenagers try very hard to hide the problems from family and friends and some have been bullied because of their problems. This results in many feeling socially isolated, unhappy and many don't seek help. One teenager described the problem in a new report published in March 2018 as "not life threatening, but life ruining"

Is there anything I can do to help myself?

There are some things you can do that are good for you, but also might help the problem, although this can take time.

Drinking plenty of water based drinks helps by ensuring that urine (wee) remains dilute and pale. Concentrated urine irritates the lining of the bladder and makes wetting problems worse. Fizzy drinks and drinks that contain caffeine (tea, coffee, hot chocolate and energy drinks) also irritate the bladder and can make wetting worse, so should be avoided. A good fluid intake can also help prevent wee infections (also known as urinary tract infections or UTI).

- Drinking well also helps poos to remain soft and prevents constipation. Constipation can cause bladder problems or make them worse.
- Teenage girls should be drinking about 1.5 – 2 litres of water based drinks per day. Boys should be having about 2- 2.5 litres per day. If you are taking plenty of exercise or the weather is very hot, you should have more than this
- Eating plenty of fruit and vegetables is not only good for health, but helps prevent constipation.
- Going to the toilet as soon as you feel the need helps. You may need to ask your school nurse to help you arrange a toilet pass if your school does not let you go when you need to. Many schools use a 'time out' card or 'medical pass' so others will not find out about the problem.

Can anything else be done?

Bladder and bowel problems rarely get better on their own, but with the right treatment most can be helped and many can get completely better. The first step is to talk to a health care professional who understands the issues and knows the best route for accessing treatment locally. School nurses usually have a drop-in clinic at school, which teenagers can go to for confidential advice, support and referral on if required. The GP is another person who should be able to provide help and referral. If you don't understand or are not clear, then don't be afraid to ask lots of questions. It can help to write down a list of things you want answering before you go to see someone.

When you see a health care professional they may ask you lots of questions about your bladder and bowel and should then be able to explain the problem to you. They should discuss the options with you, so that you are involved in decisions about which treatments to try. Sometimes they may suggest something you have tried before and which did not work then. However, we know that treatments can work that have not worked in the past, so try to keep an open mind.

Further information and getting in touch

Bladder and Bowel UK have developed a range of information leaflets about various continence problems and these are all available on our [website](#). The leaflets are in our Children and Young People [Resources section](#). Bladder and Bowel UK also have a confidential helpline. For more information please send an email to: bladderandboweluk@disabledliving.co.uk or contact via telephone on: 0161 607 8219. Teenagers can get in touch themselves, or ask a parent or carer to do so on their behalf.

