

## **POLLAKIURIA – and what to do about it**

I'm posting this because my son had this condition earlier this year and it was really hard to find any information or support about it. I'm hoping that anyone who ends up desperately searching the net like I did will come across this and be able to get some advice and know they are not alone.

Pollakiuria is also known as 'frequent daytime urination syndrome' and it is when your child constantly thinks they need a wee – by 'constantly' I mean they are running to the loo EVERY 10-15 minutes throughout the entire day. When they visit the loo only a 'trickle' or drop (or nothing) comes out as their bladder is already empty.

The first thing to say is this condition is not recognised in the UK, so your GP will probably not be any help. Mine wasn't. After 4 visits to the GP in 2 weeks, he basically dismissed me as a paranoid mother and told me there was nothing wrong with my son. Easy for him to say, when he wasn't watching his child trying to wee every ten minutes, day after day after day.

That said – the first thing you must do is make sure there is no infection present, and your GP will definitely be able to help with that – but if no infection is detected then there probably won't be much more your GP can do. Please do check for infections before you follow the rest of my advice.

After my GP dismissed my concerns I did a lot of research on the internet (you will find a number of US websites which refer to the condition) and talked to my wonderful Health Visitor and together we came up with strategies for dealing with the condition, which I have described below. They worked for my son and I hope they work for you too.

Pollakiuria is an anxiety related condition, it occurs mainly in children under 10 and usually around a time of change, for example starting school or changing to a new childcare setting, or changes at home. My son was only 3 when he got the condition but as an August birthday, he was due to start school the same year. We had been talking about “when you go to school” and I think it's possible he had some worries about this. Other possibilities I wondered about: worries about going dry at night (he had gone dry a month or so beforehand, but then had a bad week where he had lots of accidents), worries about changes in his body (a couple of times he said his “willy hurt” and when I checked, it was semi erect, so I wondered if the fact that he was beginning to get erections was causing him concern), and worries about the situation at home (we are a 'blended family' and there are often problems with my stepkids which can upset his dad and me). Hopefully you might be able to identify what it is that is worrying your child and reassure them.

My son also had some problems at night – if he slept through he'd be fine, but if he woke up in the night then he'd be running to the loo every 15 minutes for up to 3 hours. This had a devastating effect on his sleep patterns and mine, which only added to the problem. However, the condition does not always manifest itself at night so you may find your child has no problem at night time.

My health visitor explained to me that if the capacity of the bladder (a stretchy muscle) is not used then it will shrink to a tiny size, and feel full with only a few drops of urine in it. What you need to do if your child has pollakiuria is re-train the bladder and gradually stretch it out again so that it gets used to holding larger amounts of urine. Here's how we did it:

1. **RELAX AND ACT NORMALLY.** Your child can sense your concerns about his/her behaviour and that is only adding to his/her worries. Remember, this is an anxiety-related condition. **Do not give any indication that their behaviour is worrying you.** Don't follow your child to the loo – assuming they are toilet trained, let them go by themselves.

2. DON'T DISCUSS IT in front of your child. This may be hard if you meet a friend or your mum phones up, because you'll need support, but **don't be tempted to ever talk about it while your child is in earshot**. They can hear you and it will add to their anxiety.
3. EXPLAIN THE BLADDER – BUT ONLY ONCE. Find a quiet time with your child and tell them about their bladder – the place in their bodies where wee wee is made. Tell them it can stretch and hold a lot of wee wee before it needs to come out. Then don't refer to it again. My son remembered this conversation and after he slept through for the first night in weeks, he did a huge wee and proudly told me “I made my wee wee big again”.
4. USE DISTRACTION TECHNIQUES. **This was the focus of our approach**. Essentially, you need to use distraction to gradually extend the length of time between loo visits, so your child's bladder gets re-trained. So, if your child says they need a wee, you say “Can you help me tidy these bricks away first?” Then when the bricks are tidy you say “Oh, come and look at this bird in the garden!” And then you say “Shall we do a jigsaw?” Just keep distracting them as long as possible. Without drawing any attention to it, set yourself targets, increasing them gradually: 20 mins, 30 mins, 40 mins. If your child needs a wee while you're out and about, say “you'll have to wait until we get home, there's no toilet here”. There will be some times when distraction doesn't work and your child insists on going to the loo or begins to get upset, in which case just let them go, don't make any issue of it, and start again with a new time target when they get back.
5. KEEP FLUID LEVELS UP. Don't give your child excessive amounts to drink, but you do need to make sure they are drinking regularly because the tiny amounts of urine in their bladder will be quite concentrated and that might cause irritation. Just have a drink on hand all the time, but there's no need to put pressure on them to drink.
6. TRY THE POTTY AT NIGHT. If your child exhibits symptoms at night time, one thing we found helped was putting the potty next to my son's bed. I told him “If you need a wee in the night, you don't need to go all the way to the toilet, your potty is right here”. This seemed to reassure him and he began sleeping better almost immediately. I also slept better as I wasn't listening out for little feet pattering to the loo all night! Don't be tempted to put your child back in nappies at night if they are already out of them.
7. REASSURE YOUR CHILD. If you have some idea what might be worrying your child, try chatting about it in a relaxed way, or find 'situation' books in the library to read with your child if appropriate. Tell them they can talk to you if they have any worries and reassure them that everything is ok.
8. DON'T STOP THE CAR! Go prepared for long journeys, or even short ones. If your child needs a wee in the car, distract them with singing songs, playing I-Spy, a bag of games/toys, playing a story CD... your child might feel as though they are going to wet themselves, but they aren't. Just try to take their mind off it. I know it's hard. We had a nightmare journey to the peak district on holiday with my son shouting “I need a wee” every 10 minutes all the way up the M1!!!!
9. KEEP USUAL ROUTINES. You should still encourage your child to go to the loo on waking, and at bedtime, as normal, because these are good habits they need to keep.
10. IGNORE LEG CROSSING. Your child might have developed a habit of grasping their genitals, or crossing their legs, as though they are desperate for a wee. This can be very distressing to see, but pay no attention to it whatsoever.
11. GET CHILDCARE PROVIDERS ON BOARD. Your childcare providers or school need to be using distraction techniques as well. But remember, don't discuss it with them in front of your child. Print off a copy of this document, or write a letter, or phone them to discuss it. My son had three childcare providers. Two of them were very supportive of our approach and threw themselves whole-heartedly into distraction techniques. One (our childminder, who had previously been fantastic in every respect) did not approve – she said “If he looks like he needs to go, I'll just let him go”. Long after my son's condition had improved at

home and with his other childcare providers, he was still making frequent loo visits at the childminder's house. His behaviour took a lot longer to get back to normal in her care.

I really hope my tips will help your child. My son started getting better almost immediately we implemented distraction techniques and his bladder began to stretch again. In total, he had the condition for four weeks and he did have a couple of mini-relapses (specifically a couple of bad nights) afterwards, but we just paid no attention and things rectified themselves.

Remember, you're not alone, this is a real condition and other parents and children have been through the same thing. Your child will get better. I wish you the very best of luck.