

Dysfunctional Voiding (DV)

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What is DV?

DV means that your bladder does not empty properly. As a result, your bladder gets too full with urine. You may have problems such as bedwetting, wetting your clothes during the daytime, or urine infections.

What causes DV?

Your body has a special muscle called a **sphincter** (SPEENK-ter) that helps keep the urine inside your bladder. Normally, when your bladder becomes full, it sends a message to your brain saying it's time to go to the bathroom. When you pee, you make the sphincter relax (that is, you open the valve.) Then the bladder squeezes the urine out. You can't control the bladder muscle, but you can control the sphincter. Some people develop a habit of keeping the sphincter closed so they don't have to pee very often.

There are many reasons why people do this:

- Their bladder was not fully developed yet, and they had problems with wetting their clothes
- They are busy and don't want to pee
- They had an infection and it hurt to pee
- They do not like to pee in bathrooms away from home

Over time, the bladder becomes stretched, and it stops sending messages that it is getting full. You may not realize your bladder is full until it is so full it is about to overflow. Then you may have to run to the bathroom very quickly, or you may wet your pants. You may also have urine left in your bladder after you pee, even though you don't feel it.

So is it all my fault?

No! DV is a complex disease. It comes from a combination of the way your bladder, your sphincter, and your brain all work together. It is a medical condition that can be treated.

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How is DV diagnosed?

Your doctor will ask you many questions about how you go to the bathroom, and about any other medical problems you have had. Then he or she will do a detailed physical exam, and test your urine. After this, your doctor will decide if you need other tests, such as pictures of your kidneys. Your doctor may also refer you to a **urologist** to do some more tests of how your bladder works. A urologist is another type of doctor who specializes in problems with the bladder and kidneys.

Is DV harmful?

DV can be embarrassing or inconvenient when you wet your pants. But it's worse than that. **It can actually damage the kidneys.** Kidneys can get damaged when urine backs up from a bladder that is too full. The extra urine can stretch out the bladder and other parts of the urinary system so they don't work as well.

Getting urine out of your bladder helps wash away bacteria and prevent infections. People with DV often have problems with urinary infections. These infections can make you feel very sick, and they damage the kidneys. This damage can't be fixed, so your doctor wants to help you to prevent any more damage.

What is the treatment?

- **The most important thing is to pee regularly.** Usually this means every 2 to 3 hours. Keeping your bladder empty helps prevent infections. It also prevents you from wetting your clothes when your bladder gets too full.
- **Controlling constipation also helps.** Eating more foods with fiber in them is a good start. Your doctor may also prescribe a medicine to help you empty your stool (poop) more easily.
- If you are a girl, be sure to pull your pants down all the way, and keep your knees apart when you pee. This helps prevent urine from going into your vagina when you pee. Some girls find it helps to sit backwards on the toilet.
- In most cases, medicines don't help, but going to the toilet a lot does help. Your doctor can give you a note for school to let you go to the bathroom more often.
- A small number of patients need other treatments, such as medicines, biofeedback, or surgery.

Most patients **can** improve and get more control over their bladders. It takes a lot of time. Follow your doctor's instructions carefully. Be sure to ask if you have any questions, or if there are things you don't understand.



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