

# PORTLAND

*lifestyle & family*

PARENTING / FEBRUARY 1, 2016

## Ask Ariel: Staying Dry at School



Dear Ariel,

My 7-year-old wets himself at school. He never has an accident at home — if he were home-schooled, we wouldn't even know he has a problem. He has at least two accidents a week, and doesn't seem to care. Right now, I dress him in padded incontinence underwear because I worry about bullying, but he shows no signs of stopping. Help!

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Dear Help,

Daytime wetting occurs in about 3.5 percent of healthy children and kids list wetting their pants as one of the most stressful things to happen at school. Although you write that your son doesn't seem to care about wetting his pants, you have made it easy for him by providing the embarrassment-saving padded underwear.

The first suggestion I have is to take away the special undies. Your son may be teased but a little teasing is much better than developing a habit of eliminating without using a toilet. You can bring an extra set of clothes and give it either to the front office or to your child's teacher to have for him case of an accident. This way he will have to confront the accident, rather than pretend it isn't really a problem.

The next suggestion is to talk with your son about the bathroom situation at school. Elementary school bathrooms are the only unsupervised areas of a school and some kids goof around or tease younger students there. Is he afraid to use the school bathroom? Does he have to ask permission to go? Does it smell bad? Does the teacher provide regular bathroom breaks where everyone is given the opportunity to go? I have known elementary-age boys to urinate on trees at recess because they didn't want to miss too much recess time by having to walk all the way inside the school building. See if your son is willing to discuss the problem with you — there might be a simple solution. Some kids respond well to small daily rewards for behavior; you could try this each time there is a dry day at school.

If talking to your son doesn't yield much information, try speaking to his teacher about the bathroom routines in his class. This might give you some insight about how to help your son strategize bathroom use.

Finally, if the problem persists, take him to see his pediatrician. He could be suffering with a urinary tract infection or some other medical problem that his doctor can help diagnose and treat.

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Ariel Frager



Ariel Frager is a school counselor and has a private therapy practice that specializes in treating children, adolescents and families. She lives in Portland with her husband, son, dog and kitty cat.



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