

Dysfunctional Voiding (DV)

What is DV?

DV means that your bladder does not empty the way it should. 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 (bladder) infections.

What causes DV?

Your body has a special muscle called a **sphincter** (SPHEENK-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 to let the bladder empty. Then the bladder muscle squeezes the urine out. You can't control the bladder muscle, but you can control the sphincter muscle. Some people develop a habit of keeping the sphincter closed so they don't have to pee very often. There are many causes for dysfunctional voiding:

- Constipation
- Habitually holding urine
- Holding urine when away from home
- Bladder infections

Over time, if the bladder gets stretched by holding too much urine, it stops sending messages to the brain 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, which increases your risk of bladder infection.

How is Dysfunctional Voiding diagnosed?

Your doctor will ask you questions about how you go to the bathroom and about any other medical problems you have had. Then (s)he will do a detailed physical exam and test your urine. After this, (s)he will decide if you need other tests, such as an ultrasound 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 Dysfunctional Voiding harmful?

DV can be embarrassing or inconvenient when you wet your pants. **It can also 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 (bladder) 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 while awake. Keeping your bladder empty helps prevent infections. It also prevents you from wetting your clothes when your bladder gets too full.
- When your child pees, have him/her count to ten alligators. We will show you exactly what we mean during your visit. They should pee, then, while still sitting on the toilet, count 'one alligator, two alligators, three alligators' all the way up to ten. Then, the child should try to pee again.
- **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 soften your stool (poop) so it comes out 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 peeing 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** get better and have more control over their bladders. It takes a lot of time. Follow your doctor's instructions carefully. If you have any questions, or if there are things you don't understand, be sure to ask your doctor.

