

Toilet Training

Like most parents, you may be looking forward to the day when your child no longer needs diapers. Toilet training can seem a big task especially when relatives, friends, neighbors and books all offer different advice. Relax. Your child will learn to use the toilet when they are ready. This tip sheet gives some suggestions on how to start toilet training with your toddler.

Most children will be fully day trained somewhere between 2½ and 4 years of age and night trained by 8 years. Try not to rush toilet training. Your child cannot be forced to go to the toilet. Children who refuse to sit on the potty or toilet may not be ready for toilet training. Nagging or punishing your child will not help.

WHEN ARE CHILDREN READY FOR TOILET TRAINING?

Children may be ready to start toilet training when they can:

- say when they are wet or soiled, or want to go to the bathroom
- wait, or control the urge to wet or soil
- show an interest in the toilet — or a desire not to wet or soil diapers
- undress — or at least pull their own pants down

Other signs that the timing is right include very wet rather than damp diapers, longer dry periods between wet diapers, regular bowel movements that are passed easily and general good health. Do not start toilet training while your child is unwell.

HOW LONG DOES TOILET TRAINING TAKE?

Learning to use the toilet takes time. Once toilet training starts, it can take 3 to 4 weeks before children are mostly dry, but some children may take several months. Many children still accidentally wet or soil their pants a year or more after training begins. All children are different. Do not worry if your child is faster or slower than others.

It is easier to learn to urinate than to pass a bowel movement in the toilet. Many children who are dry during the day wait until their diaper is on during sleep before passing a bowel movement. This is normal and should not be a cause for concern.

If your child is in day care, check which methods of toilet training your child's daytime carers use. Explain your methods and work together.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR TOILET TRAINING

Find Out Your Child's Pattern

Take note of the times of the day when your child usually wets or passes bowel movements. You will be able to sit your child on the toilet at these times when you start training. They will soon associate feelings of a full bladder or bowel with using the toilet. If your child does not show a regular pattern, or wets often, they may not be ready for toilet training.

Get Ready Everything You Need

You can use a potty or the toilet for training. If you use the toilet, get a toilet seat ring — so your child will not be afraid

of falling in. Provide support under your child's feet, such as a stable step.

Help Your Child Get Ready

Here are some tips to help you prepare your child for toilet training:

- Only use diapers when your child is sleeping. Diapers are a sign that it is alright to wet or pass a bowel movement anytime, anywhere.
- Put your child in pants. The feeling of wet pants may help your child realize when they are wet. Cloth training pants can be helpful.
- Dress your child in loose clothing. Clothing without fasteners and buttons is easier for children to get on and off. This will make it easier for your child to go to the bathroom without help.
- Talk about the potty and what it is for, and let your child play and sit on it.
- We all learn by watching others. Let your child follow you into the bathroom to see the steps you go through when using the toilet. Talk to your child about what you are doing.



HOW TO TEACH YOUR CHILD TO USE THE TOILET

Choose a Day To Begin

You must be ready to start toilet training too. This means being able to be consistent and follow the same toileting routine every day. You cannot do it one day and not the next. To start toilet training, set aside half a day when you will be home. It is best to start when the whole family is relaxed and not under extra stress.

Explain How To Use the Toilet

Tell your child the steps to follow when they want to go to the bathroom. The steps may include:

- Tell Mommy or Daddy.

- Go to the bathroom.
- Take off your pants.
- Sit on the toilet.
- Try to do a *pee* or a *poo* (use whatever words mean something to your child).
- Wipe yourself (or ask for help to wipe).
- Flush the toilet.
- Wash your hands.

▼ Give Your Child Plenty To Drink

Always ensure that your child drinks plenty of fluids. On the first day of training, you may like to provide extra drinks to increase the chance of your child wanting to go to the bathroom. Do not force your child to drink more than they want. Help keep bowel movements soft by making sure your child has plenty of fruit and fiber in their diet.

▼ Ask Your Child if They Need To Go

If your child does not tell you when they need the bathroom, ask them from time to time. Watch for signs like holding themselves, pulling a face or straining to pass a bowel movement. Remind your child of the steps to follow when they need to go to the bathroom.

▼ Encourage Your Child To Sit on the Toilet

When you think your child may need to go, sit them on the toilet for 3 to 5 minutes. The best times to do this include:

- when you see signs that your child may need to go
- after waking in the morning
- after meals
- before going out
- when returning home

Do not force your child to sit on the toilet. If your child does not want to sit, leave it at that. You are simply showing your child the steps for when they are ready to follow them.

If your child sits regularly, is relaxed and encouraged, they will eventually do something in the toilet. Praise them if they are successful. Allow time for your child to admire what they have done and enjoy your attention, then remind them to flush the toilet. Wait at least 2 hours before taking

your child to the bathroom again, unless they ask to go sooner.

When your child sits for 3 to 5 minutes but does not do anything in the toilet, praise them for sitting. Let them get back to playing.

▼ Teach Your Child To Wash Their Hands

It is important that your child learns good hygiene from an early age. After every use of the potty or toilet, they should wash their hands. You may need to remind and help them to do this at first. Praise cooperation.

▼ Encourage Desirable Behavior

Praise your child for any steps they follow, any progress they make, and when they are successful in using the toilet. Tell your child what they have done well — *Martin, well done for telling me when you need to go to the bathroom.* You may like to reward your child with a special activity such as a story or phone call to someone special, or other rewards such as stickers or stamps.

▼ Stay Calm if Your Child Accidentally Wets or Soils

When your child accidentally wets or soils their pants, calmly say something like — *Oops, you're wet. Let's change.* Go to the bathroom and help your child clean up. Stay calm and do not punish your child. Do not talk a lot or make cleaning up a fun time for your child. A few minutes after changing, remind your child of the toileting steps.

TIPS FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

When teaching boys to urinate in the toilet, it may be helpful to encourage them to sit down first. If they start by standing, they may be less likely to want to sit on the toilet at all. After all, it is fun to spray the back of the toilet and make sounds with the spray. Once sitting on the toilet has been mastered, you may like to have Dad or an older brother (where appropriate) show your child how to urinate while standing.

When teaching girls to wipe themselves after passing a bowel movement, the correct method is to wipe from front to back to help prevent infections.

TIPS TO HELP PREVENT ACCIDENTS

Toilet training is a learning process, and there are times when children accidentally wet or soil their pants. Sometimes children will wet their pants straight after getting off the toilet. Sometimes they will do some in the toilet and more in their pants soon after. This is normal and indicates that you are catching your child at the right time, and they are starting to learn.

Here are some more hints to help prevent accidents:

- Make sure your child can easily reach the potty or toilet.
- During long play periods and before outings, ask your child if they want to go to the bathroom.
- Encourage your child to go to the bathroom on outings.
- Keep diapers on at night until your child usually stays dry until morning.
- Ask your child to sit on the toilet just before going to bed.

Children may accidentally wet or soil their pants when they are sick or when their usual routine is disrupted. Events such as being separated from the family, the arrival of a new baby or moving house can disrupt a child's routine and cause stress. If this happens, have a break from toilet training. Start again with sitting on the potty or toilet when everything has returned to normal.

Once your child has started to learn the steps, wait until they have completed several steps before giving any praise. When your child has continued success at completing all the steps, stop giving rewards. Continue to praise your child from time to time for following the toileting steps.

ANOTHER SUGGESTION

To show your child the toileting steps, here is another suggestion you can try. Set up a fun game where your child can help a doll or teddy bear learn to go to the bathroom:

- Go through the steps that dolly follows when she wants to go to the bathroom.
- Praise dolly for following the steps.
- Next, let your child pretend to be dolly.

- Ask your child what they should do, for example, *What should you do when you want to go to the bathroom?* or *What comes next?*
- If your child does not know, remind them.
- Help your child complete the step if necessary.
- Praise cooperation and success at each step.

KEY STEPS

- **Remember, when your child is ready, they will learn to use the toilet.**

FOR FURTHER HELP See the *Positive Parenting* booklet for more information on positive parenting strategies. If you have any questions or have tried these strategies and are concerned about your child's progress, contact the service where you were given this tip sheet or contact:

Triple P is a parenting program developed by Professor Matthew R. Sanders and colleagues in the Parenting and Family Support Centre, School of Psychology at The University of Queensland with funding support from Queensland Health, Victorian Department of Human Services, Health Department of Western Australia, and National Health and Medical Research Council.

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- **Use a potty or a toilet with a seat ring and a step.**
- **Explain the toileting steps to your child.**
- **Encourage your child to sit on the toilet.**
- **Do not insist if your child refuses to sit on the toilet.**
- **Praise and reward your child for following the steps and for any successes.**
- **Stay calm if your child accidentally wets or soils.**
- **If toilet training becomes upsetting, wait for a few weeks and try again.**