

TOILET TRAINING BASICS

Your child is toilet trained when, without any reminders, he walks to the potty, undresses, and urinates or has a bowel movement. Some children learn to control their bladders first, other start with bowel control. Both kinds of control can be worked on simultaneously. Bladder control through the night normally happens later than daytime control. The gradual type of toilet training discussed here can usually be completed in 2 weeks to 2 months.

TOILET TRAINING READINESS

Most children are ready for toilet training by 24-30 months of age, some by 18 months. By the time your child is 3 years old, he will probably be toilet trained. The following signs indicate that your child is ready:

- Your child understands what “pee” “poop” “dry” “wet” “clean” “messy” and “potty” mean. (Teach him these words).
- Your child understands what the potty is for (teach this by having your child watch parents, older siblings, and children near his age use the toilet correctly). Comment about how everyone poops and pees.
- Your child prefers dry, clean diapers. (Change your child frequently to encourage this preference).
- Your child can recognize the feeling of a full bladder and the urge to have a bowel movement; that is, he paces, jumps up and down, holds his genitals, pulls at his pants, squats down, or tells you. Help him understand what these signals mean: “The poop (or pee) wants to come out. It needs your help.” Try to teach your child to come to you at these times.
- Your child has the ability to briefly postpone urinating or having a bowel movement. He may go off by himself or come back wet or soiled, or he may wake up from naps dry.

METHODS FOR TOILET TRAINING

The way to train your child is to offer encouragement and praise, be patient, and make the process fun. Avoid any pressure or punishment. Your child must feel in control of the process.

- **BUY SUPPLES**

Potty chair – (floor level type) If his feet can reach the floor while he sits on the potty your child has leverage for pushing and a sense of security. He can also get on and off whenever he wants to.

Favorite treats – fruit slices, crackers, stickers, stars, or rewards.

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Make the potty chair one of your child's favorite possessions. Take your child with you to buy a potty chair. Make it clear that this is your child's own special chair. Have your child help you put his name on it or decorate it. Allow your child to sit on it fully clothed until he is comfortable with using it as a chair.

- **ENCOURAGE PRACTICE RUNS ON THE POTTY**

Do a practice run whenever your child gives a signal that he needs to go. If your child is reluctant to cooperate, he can be encouraged to sit on the potty by doing something fun, for example, you might read a story to him.

If your child wants to get up after a minute of encouragement, let him get up. Never force your child to sit there. Never physically hold your child on the potty chair or strap him in. Even if he seems to be enjoying it, end each session after 5 minutes unless something is happening.

- **PRAISE OR REWARD YOUR CHILD FOR COOPERATION OR ANY SUCCESS**

All cooperation with these practice sessions should be praised. For example, you might say, "You're trying real hard to put the pee-pee in the potty" or "You are sitting on the potty just like Mommy." If your child urinates or stools into the potty, he can be rewarded with treats or stickers.

- **CHANGE YOUR CHILD AFTER ACCIDENTS**

Change your child as soon as it is convenient, but respond sympathetically. Say something like, "You wanted to go pee-pee in the potty, but you went pee-pee in your pants. I know that makes you sad. You'll get better at this." If you feel a need to be critical, keep it to mild verbal disapproval and use it rarely (for example, "Big boys don't go pee-pee in their pants" or mention the name of another child whom he likes and who is trained). Dump stool into the toilet and flush together.

- **INTRODUCE TRAINING PANTS AFTER YOUR CHILD STARTS USING THE POTTY**

Switch from diapers to training pants after your child is cooperative about sitting on the potty-chair and passes about half of his urine and bowel movements there. He definitely needs training pants if he comes to you to help him take off his diaper so he can use the potty. Take your child out with you to buy the underwear and make it a reward for his success. Buy loose-fitting ones that he can easily lower and pull up by himself. Once you start using training pants, use diapers only for naps and nighttime. Introduce underwear as a privilege.

ASK US FOR GUIDELINES ON TOILET TRAINING RESISTANCE IF-

- Your child won't sit on the potty or toilet.
- Your 2-year-old child is negative about toilet training.
- Your child holds back bowel movements.
- Your child is over 3 years old and not daytime toilet trained.
- The approach described here isn't working after 2 months.

