



Toilet Training

As a parent, you play a key role in toilet training your child. You need to provide your child with direction, motivation, and reinforcement, and have time and patience during the toilet training process. You can encourage your child to be independent and allow your child to master each step at his own pace.

When should I begin toilet training my child?

- Toilet training can begin when your child shows signs of readiness
- In general, starting before age 2 is not recommended as the readiness skills and physical development your child needs only occur between 18 months to 2.5 years of age
- Your child may be ready for toilet training when he
 - Can imitate your behaviour and can demonstrate independence by saying “No”
 - Expresses interest in toilet training e.g. following you to the bathroom
 - Is able to indicate that diapers are wet/soiled or that he is urinating/defecating
 - Is able to pull clothes up and down (or putting on and taking off)
- Timing is important
 - Toilet training should not be started when your child is ill or experiencing major life changes such as moving house, expecting new siblings, attending a new school or transiting to a new child care centre/environment



What are some tips I can follow for toilet training?

1. Get your environment ready

- You can start with either a potty or the toilet bowl
- A potty is easier for a child to get on/off, and many children feel more secure because their feet are supported on the floor
- When training your child to use the toilet bowl, use a step stool to help your child get on/off, and use a toilet training seat if the toilet seat is too big

2. Use the right language

- Choose words that help your child to describe body parts, urine and bowel movements
- All caregivers need to use the same words to avoid confusing your child

3. Make potty visits a routine

- Let your child first sit on the potty fully clothed once a day as a routine
 - Allow him to leave at any time, and never force your child to spend time sitting on it
 - After your child is comfortable with the potty, let him sit there without clothes
- Once he is used to it, bring your child to the potty at regular times in the day (e.g. 30 minutes after meals, at bath time)
- Watch for cues that may signal the need for a bowel movement e.g. squatting, making straining noises, grimacing), and ask your child if he needs to go
- If your child struggles strongly or is unable to pass urine/motion, just try again the next time
- If your child is successful, praise and/or reward him

4. Clothing/diapers

- Keep your child in loose, easy-to-remove clothing
- Help him master the undressing and dressing needed to sit on the potty
- When your child is successfully using the potty several times a day, he may be ready for underwear for part of the day
- Because diapers can be very reassuring, do not rush your child out of diapers
- Keep your child clean and dry, and do not leave him in soiled clothing as a training method



What are some things to note when toilet training my child?

- Accidents are common and should be expected in the training process
- Give praises and hugs for successful attempts. Punishment or scolding may make the training process more stressful for your child
- Boys generally take a longer time to be trained than girls
- Boys should learn to urinate while seated first, because if they first try to urinate while standing, they may not want to sit when passing motion
- A well-balanced diet with sufficient fibre intake helps your child produce soft stools and makes toilet training easier. Ensure your child drinks enough water all day.

What about night-time training?

Help your child be successful in toileting during the day first before starting with night-time training. Night-time dryness may not occur until a year or so later after daytime dryness is achieved.

TIPS!

Take your child to the toilet just before going to bed

With your child's permission, wake him at night to use the toilet

Ask your child to withhold urine a little during the day to gain better control

When should I consult my doctor?

- Your child seems to be uncomfortable or is experiencing pain when passing urine or motion
- You have tried potty training regularly with little or no success
- Your child is still consistently wetting the bed more than twice a week by age 6

Sources: *Department of Child Development, KK Women's and Children's Hospital;*
American Academy of Paediatrics

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