



# Toilet training your child

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It's a real milestone in your child's development when your child learns to use the toilet. When they are ready for this important step they begin to recognise the feeling that they need to use the toilet, and they can 'hold on' until they are in the appropriate place. Developing this skill in a supportive and positive environment promotes positive self-esteem and is an important aspect of the development of your child's self-help skills. Not only does it give them a sense of accomplishment and independence, you'll also feel a sense of relief – no more dirty nappies!

In this information sheet we aim to answer some of your basic questions about toilet training your child, as well as providing some tips on how the educators at your early childhood education and care service can support you and your child in this.

## Tips for toilet training

### **Potty or the toilet?**

When you're ready to toilet train your child, think of whether you want them to use a potty or the toilet.

Neither one is necessarily better; you should decide what works best for your family and child.

If your child is using the toilet, you may want to buy a toddler seat that can be fitted onto the toilet seat. You may also need a stool or steps so your child can reach the toilet. Some experts believe that people cannot properly empty their bladder or bowels

until they have their feet pressing down on the floor. Bringing the 'floor' up to the child's level could help them.

Using a potty may be easier for your child to go and sit on when they want to wee or poo: Sometimes when they are in a hurry getting onto the toilet seat might take time. Also, some children can, at first, be scared of the height of the toilet seat.

That said, you may want to use both to begin with – potty and toilet – to see which your toddler is more comfortable with.

### **What is a good age to toilet train?**

All children are different and develop at their own pace. Generally, children aren't ready to be toilet trained until they are between 18 months and 3 years old.

Even if your child is taking more time, don't push them too much. Wait for them to learn at their own pace.

### **Signs your child is ready to be toilet trained**

Here are some of the signs that may indicate that your child could be ready to be toilet trained:

- Your toddler can stay dry for two or more hours. This shows that their bladder muscles are getting stronger.
- They can tell you using signs or verbally that they need to wee or poo.
- They can sit comfortably in one position for a long time.
- They know how to pull their pants up or down.
- They dislike wearing a wet or soiled nappy.
- They can follow simple instructions.
- They are showing an interest in adults (or their siblings) going to the toilet. They may even try to imitate others' bathroom habits.
- They poo at fairly regular and predictable intervals.
- They don't wake up in the night to poo or wee and they wake up dry from a nap.

Note that the above are only indications that your child might be ready to be toilet trained. You will need to decide for yourself when the time is right to begin toilet training.

## **Tips for toilet training**

Here are some tips to help get your child familiar with using the potty or toilet. Feel free to pick and choose – what suits one parent and child may not suit another.

- Watch out for signs that help you understand if they are ready to be toilet trained (see above section).
- Introduce them to a potty or toilet – let them sit on it with their clothes on so they become familiar with it.
- Let them watch you in the bathroom to understand the process.
- Observe any patterns, noting the times at which your child usually wees or poos. When you know that your child is expected to wee or poo, sit them on the potty or toilet. They might not do anything initially, but eventually they'll realise what they are expected to do. (Don't make them sit on it for too long a time if they are not doing anything – it shouldn't look like they're being punished.)
- Praise them when they're successful in weeing or pooing in the potty/toilet as a way of encouraging them.
- Also praise them when they have had a really good go, even if they are not successful.
- Have them drink a lot of water before they are expected to poo – it softens the poo so it's easy to pass.
- At regular intervals, ask your child if they need to wee or poo. They might be busy playing so that by the time they realise, it's too late.
- Dress them in clothes that can easily be removed if they want to use the toilet themselves.
- Ask them if they need to wee just before going to bed.
- If necessary, wake up your little one once or twice at night for them to wee so they don't wet their bed.

Also, remember that accidents happen. Don't tell your child off after an accident – it may discourage them from trying again.

## **Teaching them hygiene**

In addition to assisting them with using the toilet or potty, you can teach them how to wipe themselves and clean and wash their hands afterwards.

- Teach your child to wipe their bottoms thoroughly. You can use pre-moistened wipes for your little one to wipe their bottom effectively (remember not to flush unless they are flushable).
- Teach them to flush the toilet and wipe the toilet seat or their potty.
- Demonstrate to them how to wash their hands – first wet them, then apply soap, then scrub for at least 25 seconds to cover their whole hands, then rinse and dry.
- Teach your child to clean themselves properly even after weeing.

### **Maintaining consistency between home and early childhood education and care**

It is important for your child to have similar experiences and routines at home and at their early childhood education and care service. Share your toilet training strategies with the educators at the service your child attends. Inform them about any signs that your child uses at home to tell you that they need to use the toilet.

It may also be useful to find out from educators about your child's toileting experiences at the end of each day. Many services have a chart or whiteboard which you can look at to see how your child did that day.

You can also share your hygiene routines with the educators because you don't want your child to be confused with different experiences at home and at your service.

### **Strategies educators should use to help your child**

Patience is the most important tool for adults to remember while children are learning to use the toilet. Educators at your early childhood education and care should encourage your child in all their efforts, even if they have a setback or are not entirely successful. For example, a child who has not quite made it in time to use the toilet may be reassured by a comment such as "It's great that you knew you needed to use the toilet. Maybe next time you can let me know straight away so that I can help you get to the toilet a bit more quickly."

### **Conclusion**

Learning to use the toilet is like learning any new skill – it takes time. Each child learns at their own pace and while some children will learn to use the toilet within a week, for many others the process will be a much longer one. Your child will eventually learn to use the toilet in their own time. By working in partnership with the educators at your early childhood education and care service, the process of learning to use the toilet can be a positive and gratifying experience for all concerned.

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