

# Toilet Training



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# Why?

Lack of toilet training past the age of 4-5 may:

- Limit child's access to inclusive classrooms
- Limit child's access to integrated community settings
- Limit access to social relationships with peers
- Bring about negative perceptions and low expectations
- Negatively effect child's self-concept
- Result in dependence on others for support
- Result in skin breakdown or irritations
- Limit employment, social, recreation/leisure and other adolescent/adult community living options



# Are we ready?

## Is your child ready?

### 1. Age

- over 18 months
- mental age over 2 years

### 2. Awareness

- Does your child seem aware when diapers are wet/soiled?
  - Pulling at diaper
  - Facial expression
  - Goes to a certain place
  - Irritability
  - Gestures/signs/words
  - Stops playing briefly to have a bowel movement
- Is there any interest in using the bathroom or toilet?
- Does your child react favourably when you give him/her positive reinforcement? (ie. they do the behaviour you desire after receiving a reward?)
- Does your child have an interest in others using the bathroom or toilet?
- Is your child able to remain dry and unsoiled for 1-2 hours at a time?
- Does your child have regular bowel movements?
- Does your child urinate all at once? (as opposed to dribbling over 5 minutes)
- Able to sit still on a small chair for 3-5 minutes while you read a story?

### 3. Medical issues

- Does your child have any medical issues that may affect urination training?  
Check with your physician if you think your child may have a medical condition such as:
  - Neurogenic bladder
  - Frequent bladder infections
  - Urinary tract disorder
- If your child's bowel movements are too runny or too firm, you may need to adjust his/her diet to increase chances of success. Speak to a dietician if you need help in this area.

# Are you ready?

## 1. Time

- You need to be prepared to take your child to the toilet regularly. In the beginning, this may be every 20-60 minutes.
- It may be useful to have a timer that reminds you when you need to take your child to the toilet.

## 2. Patience

- There WILL be accidents. Be prepared and accept you will need to clean them up.
- Be prepared to do extra laundry and have spare clothes ready to go.
- No pressure on child. Stay calm and never force your child.
- Start with little goals and celebrate each success.

## 3. Consistency

- You will need to be consistent with rewards/motivators and your toileting plan.
- If you are going away for more than a few days, it may not be a good time to start training. Plan to begin training when there are the least amount of events going on if possible.

## 4. Environment

- Decide whether boys will be trained standing up or sitting down
- Ensure proper seating on the toilet
  - Have a stool for their feet for security & stability
  - Use a potty seat to increase your child's feeling of security
  - Try a small potty chair placed right by the toilet
  - Use music to calm if desired
  - Have books on hand
  - Have motivators within view
- Have visual supports if needed (speak to your Occupational Therapist or Speech-Language Pathologist).



# Preparation

## 1. Bye bye diapers!

- It is hard for your child to tell if they are wet/dry in a diaper.
- Show your child there are no more diapers so they understand that they are not an option.
- Have your child wear regular underwear with plastic pants over them.
- When possible, let your child be diaper and underwear free (eg. outside in summer, in bath) so they can feel and connect when they are urinating.
- Be aware that some children have sensory aversions and you may need to try a couple styles of underwear to find the one they are most comfortable in.
- Use pull ups for naps and nighttime

## 2. Get familiar

- Talk about toileting
- Read about toileting (see resources at back of package)
- 'Toilet train' stuffed animals or dolls
- Use your words to explain what the sensation is, eg. "you went pee!"

## 3. Recording

- Figure out how often to take your child to the toilet
  - Record how often our child is wet
  - For 5-7 days, check your child every 30 minutes to see if he/she is wet or dry
    - if dry, do nothing; if wet, change pants as usual
  - Record W(wet) or D(dry) on the data sheet
    - Note how long your child can stay dry
    - Note any patterns
    - It is likely they will be wet approximately 20 minutes after a meal or drink

## 4. Motivators/Rewards

- Choose a motivating item for your child based on their likes/dislikes
- Candy or food is not recommended but if it is most successful, could be tried.
- Motivator/Reward ideas** (choose what your child will respond to the best):
  - A poster by the toilet the child can put stickers on
  - A 'potty book' the child can put stickers in
  - Marbles or pennies (if age appropriate)
  - Stampers, bubbles, small dollar store items

- A chart for stickers. If they get 5 stickers (or a number you choose), they get a larger prize (eg. a small toy, a trip to a favoured place, a movie...)
- Set out 2-3 different rewards on a tray or muffin tin so they can select a favourite
- Put a tin foil pie plate in the toilet bowl for you child to 'hear' the results
- REMEMBER: Keep the rewards simple and inexpensive so you can be consistent and the reward is immediate.

## Trip Training

- At the appropriate time (based on your recording), say something like, "It's time to go to the bathroom". Don't ask - TELL!
- Have your child say "bathroom/pee/etc." or give them the picture symbol you selected
- In the bathroom, use hand-over-hand instruction, if needed, to assist the child to pull down pants, etc.
- Have the child stand or sit on the toilet
  - Remember: he/she should need to urinate since you calculated the appropriate interval
  - Make sure he/she sits until urination occurs
    - If your child gets up before urination occurs, it is highly likely it will occur within the next 5-10 minutes as an 'accident'
    - To help with this, sing songs, read stories, have a toy to fidget with, do a puzzle, have the tap running
    - Ignore attempts to leave as much as possible
    - Use a timer that beeps so they know when the session will end
    - You may need to begin by offering rewards simply for sitting on the toilet for longer and longer periods of time
- When urination occurs in the toilet, provide your child with a reward (see above) as soon as he/she is finished
  - Don't get all excited while urination is taking place, or it is likely to stop before completed!

- Remember to include LOTS of praise and other positive feedback as well! (Eg. the 'potty dance')
- Assist the child to wipe, get up, flush and pull up pants using hand over hand instruction
  - Good time to teach hand washing as well
- Record a T on the data sheet
- Repeat at the next scheduled time
- Continue to do this routine until your child is dry during 90-100% of the training time for at least 2 weeks
  - Don't change anything before the 2 weeks is up
  - If your child asks to go in between times -- GO FOR IT!!

### Accidents Happen

- If wet in between times, ignore, if possible
- At scheduled time, change him/her into dry clothes as rapidly and neutrally as possible
  - Don't talk, scold, explain, lecture, etc.
  - Don't spend a long time on this: Be Quick!
  - Don't have the child clean up, launder wet clothes, etc. Just get him/her changed in a way that results in a minimal attention and interaction with you
  - Record a W on the data sheet for that interval
- Don't give up! If you haven't any success after one month, talk to your Occupational Therapist.

## Self Initiation

By the end of this phase your child will have learnt to urinate in the toilet when needed, without someone taking or reminding him/her. He/She may continue to need assistance with pulling pants up/down, wiping, flushing, hand washing, etc.

Your child will begin to self initiate on their own! You may see him/her

- Grab him/herself and/or 'dance'
- Use the speech you modeled for them (eg. "pee" or point to picture)
- Take your hand and lead you to the bathroom
- Stand by the bathroom door and look distressed

If any of these occur, provide feedback ("oh, you need to go to the bathroom!") and follow through immediately!



If no signals for self initiation occur, begin to extend the length of time between taking your child to the toilet very gradually by 5-10-15 minutes.

- This gives your child more opportunity to take the lead and produce a signal
- Look for even the slightest signal and then GO!
  - Don't ask "Do you have to go to the bathroom/pee/etc?" If you see a signal - provide feedback and just GO.
- When urination occurs in the toilet, provide reward as soon as he/she is FINISHED.
  - These should not be available at any other time
- Don't get all excited while urination is taking place or it may be stopped
- Remember to include lots of praise and other positive feedback as well

Wet pants may increase slightly for the first few days but if they start to increase dramatically or over a long period of time:

- You may have moved too fast: back up to trip training for another 1-2 weeks and then try again
- You may be missing signals: pay attention!
- You may be getting stingy with the reinforcer: Don't!

## Nighttime

By the end of this phase, your child has learned to stay dry at night when taken to the toilet at specific intervals by an adult.

Your child may continue to need assistance with pulling pants up/down, wiping, flushing, hand washing, etc.

Don't even think about moving into this phase until your child self-initiates and has stayed 100% dry for at least 2 weeks!!

- Usually when this is the case, the person urinates very 2-3 hours, at the most

### BED WETTING

- one of every 4 five year olds bed wet
- one of every 10 six year olds bed wet

- bed wetting is more common in boys than girls

#### Medical issues:

If there are concerns about medical issues that may affect the person's ability to stay dry at night, check with a physician before beginning. eg. Known sleep disorder, frequent bladder infections, other concerns.

#### Prepare:

- Have a reward available for the child when they wake up dry.
- Double-sheet the bed with a plastic bed protector in between two sheets
- Do not provide liquid for 1-2 hours before bedtime
- Do not put on diapers, pull-ups or plastic pants on the child while in bed
- Be prepared to be tired during the process!

#### Night time urination training:

- have your child urinate just before bed time
- have a regular bed time routine each night
- two hours later, wake him/her up and take to the bathroom
  - o reward enthusiastically with praise if the bed is dry AND urination occurs in the toilet
  - o if your child is wet, change the bed quickly and put him/her back to bed without a fuss
- do this every 2-3 hours all night long
- if the bed is dry ALL NIGHT, the child earns their big reward in the morning
- once the bed has been dry all night for at least one week, gradually increase the length of time between trips by 30 minute intervals
  - o at some point, your child is likely to have to go in between the times you wake him/her up
  - o wet beds may increase slightly during this 'fading' period but you shouldn't go back to 'square one'. Just take him/her every 2-3 hours again
- continue to reinforce dry beds for at least 2-3 weeks as you fade prompted awakenings

# Resources/References

Toilet Training for Everyone: It's Never Too Late! Presented by: Pat Mirenda, Ph.D., 2002



## "Everyone Poops"

Kids love this book. Written and illustrated by Taro Gomi, it was originally published in Japan in 1977. With striking illustrations and humorous text, Gomi emphasizes that while animals, from snakes and elephants to children and adults, may poop in different places and ways, everyone poops. Kids think it's funny to see all the creatures poop, but the book also helps them to realize it is natural to poop and appropriate for young children to use a potty. (Kane/Miller, 2001. ISBN: 192913214X)

**"Lift the Lid"** This lift-the-flap story by Annie Ingle is amusing. Little Bunny's sister is still in diapers, but now Little Bunny is using the potty. Once he is potty trained, he receives a gift of "big-kids" underpants. The changing expressions on the faces of Little Bunny and his mother when you lift the flaps as she is changing a dirty diaper are priceless. The book has lots of flap to lift, and it also comes with a set of stickers to use in potty training. (Random House, 2001. 037581146X)

**"On Your Potty"** When Bartholomew, an appealing little bear, wakes up, big bear George wants him to use the potty. The little bear refuses, saying, "Nah!" louder and louder until George shouts, "On Your Potty!" When Bartholomew sits on the potty, nothing happens, so George sends him out to play. While playing, Bartholomew is reminded of George's words and gets on the potty just in time. George rewards him with a big hug in this engaging picture book by Virginia Miller. (Candlewick Press, 1998. ISBN: 0763606944)

**"Ruby's Potty"** The rhyming text by Paul Rogers and the artwork by Emma Rogers create a mood of fun. Ruby, a little mouse, has a potty, but she uses it to carry things, plays with it in the sandbox, and slides it down the slide. When she needs it, she doesn't know where it is and has an accident. She doesn't want to wear diapers, so Ruby finally starts sitting on the potty. It takes time, but she's successful, to her delight. (Dutton Children's Books, 2001. ISBN: 0525468161)

**"P.J. and Puppy"** Toddler P.J. has a new potty and a new puppy. P.J. and Puppy play together, nap together, and experience accidents and success together, with potty training for P.J. and paper training for Puppy. Through it all, P.J.'s mom is a calm and helpful influence, cleaning up after accidents, cheering success. Written and illustrated by Cathryn Falwell, this book will particularly appeal to the young child who loves dogs. (Clarion Books, 1997. ISBN: 0395569184)

Potty training in a childcare setting:

<http://childcare.about.com/od/daycarecenters/a/toilettraining.htm>