



Toilet Training



Training your child to become independent with using the toilet can be very satisfying but needs patience. Children vary with how long they take to learn this important skill – some seem to pick it up like “magic” while others can take longer to get the hang of it. Toilet training takes time and thinking about how your child learns the best. It is really important to keep a positive attitude, especially when training seems to be taking a long time!

Unfortunately, children don't come into the world knowing what a toilet is.....it is another skill to learn, just like walking and talking. It's quite a tricky skill that needs physical control over the bladder and bowel as well as dressing skills, balancing, understanding words and emotional readiness.

How Do I know If My Child Is Ready for Toilet training?

- Children are usually ready for daytime training when their bladder has grown big enough ie by about 2 years of age. This may vary if your child has a disability or medical condition. You can get help from your GP, an Occupational Therapist or Continence Nurse if this is the case.
- Usually stays dry for at least one to two hours ie they can “hang on”
- Passes a good amount of wee ie not just dribbles or spots
- Does soft, formed poos.

It's also helpful if your child:

- Gives a sign when passing a wee or poo eg frowns, goes quiet etc
- Can sit for up to 2 minutes on the potty/toilet
- Can understand simple words
- Can follow a simple instruction eg “come here”
- Drinks enough and eats fibre – it is good if your child drinks six to eight drinks a day, but avoid things with caffeine eg cola, chocolate, tea or coffee as these make you do frequent small wets. Fluids also help the bowel. Fibre in fruit, vegetables, bread, cereal, rice, pasta and beans help keep the bowel regular.
- Exercise – make sure your child gets to walk, run, climb etc each day to help keep the bowel regular.

AM I READY TO TOILET TRAIN MY CHILD?

- This is going to take time and patience so it is good to think about when **you** are ready eg is the family going through lots of stresses, has my child been sick, is it the right weather to let “accidents in pants” occur.

TIPS to Help with Toilet training:

- Children learn by playing and watching others – it's a good idea to show your child how to use the toilet by demonstrating yourself or by acting it out with doll play. There are also lots of very good books you can read together.
- Don't overfocus on toilet training- only talk about toilet training when using the toilet – you don't want to feel like your day is one long trip to the toilet! Two to five minutes is long enough to practise sitting on the toilet – think about fun games to help your child to stay sitting eg books, bubbles, holding favourite toy.
- Stay positive – it can take a long time – rewards and praise **efforts** your child is making eg lots of cheers and hugs if your child stays sitting on the potty even if they don't do anything. Focus on the successes, not the "accidents".
- You are going to allow your child to wear "Big girl/boy" pants and have the nappy off – so, there are going to be accidents – make sure you don't make much fuss about cleanup of these.
- Suitable clothing – use easy to use clothing for your child ie pants that are loose and easy to pull up and down
- Make the toilet area bright and welcoming eg stickers and posters. Ensure that sitting on the toilet "feels safe" ie no wobbly seats, feet supported.
- Make sure everyone is using the same approach eg dad, grandparents, childcare.
- Think about what approach you are going to use:
 1. Wait and Catch – the child is taken to the toilet when they show signs of needing to go
 2. Sit and wait – the child is taken to the toilet at regular, planned times during the day
 3. Intensive – the child is taken at planned and frequent times.



We have a team of Occupational Therapists who can help out with more challenging problems.

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