

# What is toilet training?

## Toilet training is when a child:

- Recognises the feeling to empty their bladder or open their bowel
- Can communicate the need to go
- Gains control of their bladder and bowel in getting to the potty/toilet
- Progresses from a potty to the toilet
- Establishes an independent toilet routine.



## When will my child be ready to start?

- They understand the words “wee” and “poo” or the family term for going to the toilet, and can follow simple instructions, such as “sit down” and “come here”
- They disappear behind furniture or into another room to do a poo and do not like to be “dirty”
- The time between nappy changes becomes longer, the gap between wetting is at least an hour
- They show an interest in other members of the family going to the toilet
- They can tell you and show signs of wanting to use toilet, usually any time from 18 months (1½ years) to 3½ years. Girls can show interest before boys
- They can walk to the bathroom and pull down their pants.

Toilet training can be established quickly if your child is ready. By 3 years old most children will be able to hold their bladder and bowels in the day. Being dry at night tends to come after 4 years of age.

Remember, toilet training can be a stressful time for you and your child. Be patient, don't react, stay calm and be matter of fact. Don't be pressured by friends, family or nursery. Don't judge your child against your friend's children.

## Getting started

- Introduce toilet training by changing all your child's nappies in the bathroom; start to offer the potty or toilet at each nappy change. Allow your child to see yourself and family members use the toilet, flushing and washing hands
- Choose the potty with your child and keep it within reach of them – just for them to use and play with. Also choose themed pants or knickers with your child
- Let them sit on the potty with or without a nappy on, looking at books or blowing bubbles (this can help with a child who is holding on as it helps them to relax and open their bowel). You can also use books about potty training, eg “I want my potty”
- Have a week when you are at home with little activity to start toilet training so you have time for your child
- Start removing their nappy during the day, using it only at night
- Do not use pull-ups or trainer pants as they can feel the same as nappies to your child
- Remember to give lots of praise and use rewards such as stickers and play activities
- Encourage your child to sit on their potty when showing signs of filling their nappy. Do this in the bathroom/toilet
- If they do not 'go', engage your child with a fun activity (eg blowing bubbles) or stor, but only do this for 5 minutes
- Do not reprimand your child for any accidents



### Success?

- A wee on the potty comes first, bowel control will be slower. If they have a regular bowel movement (such as after a meal), encourage them to sit on the toilet or go to the bathroom to poo in their nappy
- Avoid putting your child under pressure to do a poo as this can lead to pain and them 'holding in', which may cause constipation
- Boys sometimes prefer to stand to wee. You can train them to pee at Rice Krispies or Quavers floating in the toilet, and get Dad or an older sibling to show them.

Patience, understanding and positive reassurance will deal with most issues of toilet training.

### Why is my child not making progress?

- You may have started 'training' too early
- Your child may not understand what is expected of them.

If progress is slow, try not to go back into nappies during the day as it gives mixed messages, and do not allow toilet training to become a battle of wills. If it's becoming stressful and unproductive, **STOP**. Leave it a couple of weeks and start again.

### Other advice you may find helpful

- Try using a child's toilet seat and have a step for their feet. *Children cannot poo easily with their legs or feet dangling!* Make them feel safe
- The correct sitting position for opening bowels is: feet flat on the floor or a step, knees higher than hips, leaning forward with elbows on the knees, bulge out the abdomen and straighten the spine
- Make nappy changing time less comfortable, eg make them stand to have their nappy changed
- Make the bathroom or toilet a fun place to be, reassure them and remove any fears
- De-sensitise the bathroom from buzzing lights, strong room fresheners and noisy flushing toilets. You could try flushing the toilet once the child has left the bathroom
- Give lots of praise and use rewards such as stickers and play activities
- Allow them to see other children of their age using the toilet and give them an incentive to succeed. If your child is old enough use star or reward charts
- Try putting pants on under their nappy so they "feel wet" or "soiled"
- Don't pressurise your child onto the toilet and/or don't take them too often. Relax the situation before you proceed again and stay calm
- Check what your child is drinking during the day. Avoid giving them tea/coffee, fizzy drinks and blackcurrant squash as these drinks may make them want to pee more often and urgently.

### How much fluid to drink/give in 24 hours

- Your child will need 6 – 8 drinks a day
- The size of drink is dependent on your child's age and bladder capacity
- A rough guide to calculate is: 30mls of water or diluted natural juice per child's year of age at each drink. So a 3 year old should have approximately 90mls (3x30) at each drink.

### When should I see the doctor?



If your child is over 3½ years and has been using a potty for over six months without success, seek your doctor's advice to exclude possible medical causes. Also seek advice if your child "holds" and becomes constipated.

### Useful websites

- [www.cshsurrey.co.uk](http://www.cshsurrey.co.uk)
- [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) (search potty training and 'Birth to Five' book)
- [www.eric.org](http://www.eric.org)
- [www.mumsnet.com/toddlers/potty-training](http://www.mumsnet.com/toddlers/potty-training)



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