

Toilet training time!

Learning to use the toilet is a big new step for toddlers and it can take them a while to get the hang of what to do. Some children seem to train themselves when they are ready, but many will need some help from their parents.



When will my child be ready?

Most children are not ready to learn to control their bowels and bladder until they are two years old and some not until they are three. Often boys are ready later than girls.

To be ready to use the toilet or potty, your child first needs to be able to tell when his bowels or bladder are full and needs to be able to hold on to his wee (urine) for an hour or so, e.g. to be waking up dry from his daytime nap.

Signs your child is ready are:

- they tell you they are doing a poo or wee
- pulling at wet and dirty nappies
- telling you that his nappy is wet
- telling you that he doesn't want to wear nappies anymore.

Be prepared to wait until your child is ready. Most toilet training problems can be avoided if you don't start too early. Don't try and set a date by which you want your child to be toilet trained, e.g. before the new baby arrives.

Getting ready for toilet training

- Teach your child the words such as wet, dry, wee, poo, it's coming.
- Choose either a potty, or a special toilet seat with a footstool or a step. A step is necessary if you choose to use a toilet, so your child can get up to the toilet and feel safe and relaxed there. A potty can be moved around the house but you may need to take it out with you if your child is not used to using a toilet.
- Some toddlers are afraid of being flushed down the toilet because they don't yet understand that they

cannot fit down such a small hole. For these children a potty is better or let them learn to flush the toilet with you or by themselves. You may need to flush it when they are safely out of the way.

- Make sure that the toilet area is safe. Keep household cleaners, deodorants and toiletries out of reach.
- If you feel comfortable about it, let your child go with you to the toilet and talk about what you are doing.
- Make sure your child is wearing clothing that is easy to get on and off, and easy to wash, such as trainer pants.
- In warm weather toilet training is often easier because there are less clothes to remove quickly when 'wee is coming'. You might like to let your child go without pants or nappies for some of the time.
- Be aware of your child's signals so you can be ready to guide her to the potty or toilet in time.

Starting toilet training

Some toddlers can be introduced to toilet training by getting comfortable with the potty first, e.g. leaving the potty in easy sight or letting teddy sit on the potty 'to do a wee'.

You might start by noticing when your child is doing a poo in her nappy and tell her, 'I think you're doing a poo'.

Later watch for signs that she is about to wee or poo and tell her as you guide her to the potty or toilet. You might say something like 'Let's see if there's a wee coming'. Eventually she will be able to know and get there herself.

If your child tells you before she does a wee or poo, thank her for telling you and take her to the toilet or potty.

If she doesn't get there in time at first, give her praise for whatever she has managed, e.g. pulling down her pants, trying to get to the toilet, or sitting on the toilet.



Make sure she sees the praise is for learning a new skill, not something she has to do to please you.

Children should not be made to sit on a potty or toilet for long periods of time. This feels like punishment to the child and does not help toilet training.

Remember:

- teach girls to wipe themselves from the front towards the back to avoid the chance of getting any poo into the vagina
- teach boys to shake their penis after a wee to get rid of any drops. For little boys who are not circumcised, they need to be especially careful as the foreskin can trap some wee
- most toddlers don't have the skills to wipe their bottom properly, so you will need to do this for them
- teach boys and girls to wash their hands after using the toilet or potty
- your toddler is not able to 'hold on' to a wee that is ready to come out
- it is common for toddlers to relax and 'let go' as soon as they stand to walk away from the potty
- control over poo may happen long before control over wee - sometimes it happens many months later.

Toilet training troubles happen for lots of reasons

- Starting too soon.
- Pressure from relatives or friends.
- Parents setting a date to have their child trained or feeling they must get their child trained.
- Battles over toilet training.
- Punishing a child for not getting it right doesn't work. Better to leave it for a couple of weeks and start again.
- Any stress in your child's life, such as a new baby or starting childcare can set her back.

Toilet training takes time – accidents happen, so try not to get cross!

Bed wetting is normal for toddlers. If your toddler is wetting the bed, comfort them rather than punish or shame them. Put a plastic or waterproof sheet over the mattress and try using toddler pullups.



REMINDERS – top tips for fuss-free toilet training!

- Start toilet training when your child shows he is ready - don't try to set a date by which you want your child trained - it puts pressure on both of you.
- Give praise for small steps - don't wait for the success of being completely toilet trained.
- Go at your child's pace, don't expect too much.
- If there are any setbacks give up for a few weeks and then start again.
- Don't get into battles over toilet training. It needs to be your child's achievement that he can be proud of.
- Punishment has no place in toilet training.

Physical problems

You should see your doctor if there are signs of urinary infections:

- weeing very often
- pain when doing wee
- blood in the wee
- wetting frequently during the day after the age of two
- the smell of your child's wee changes

- a child of four years or over is still wetting during the day.

Constipation (over 6 months)

Constipation (when it is difficult for your child to poo) can happen when:

- your child has pain and tummy ache, says it hurts to poo, or holds on because it hurts
- their food doesn't have enough fibre in it
- they don't drink enough water
- some medicines are being used
- they are not active enough.

Talk with your doctor, child health nurse, dietician, and never use laxatives or other treatments.