

# Toilet Training Your Child

## **When should I start toilet training my child?**

Do not start toilet training until both you and your child are ready. You are ready when you are able to devote the time and energy necessary to encourage your child on a daily basis for at least three months.

Your child is ready when he or she can signal that the diaper is wet or soiled, or when your child is able to say that he or she would like to go to the potty. This usually occurs when a child is 18 to 24 months of age.

## **How should I prepare my child for toilet training?**

Allow your child to be present when you go to the bathroom and make your child feel comfortable in the bathroom. Allow your child to see urine and bowel movements in the toilet. Let your child play with flushing the toilet.

Before toilet training your child, place a potty chair in your child's normal living and play area so that your child will become familiar with the potty. Consider placing a potty chair on each floor of the house if you live in a multilevel home. Allow your child to observe, touch and become familiar with the potty chair.

Tell your child that the potty chair is his or her own chair. Allow your child to sit fully clothed on the potty chair, as if it were a regular chair. Allow your child to leave the potty chair at any time. Do not force your child to spend time sitting on the chair.

After your child has become used to the potty chair and sits on it regularly with his or her clothes on, try having your child sit on the potty without wearing pants and a diaper. Let your child become comfortable with sitting on the potty without wearing pants and a diaper.

The next step is to show your child how the potty chair is used. Place stool from a dirty diaper into the potty chair. Allow your child to observe the transfer of the bowel movement from the potty chair into the toilet. Let your child flush the toilet and watch the bowel movement disappear down the toilet.

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## How do I teach my child to use the toilet?

After your child has become comfortable with flushing the toilet and sitting on the potty chair, you may begin teaching your child to go to the bathroom. Keep your child in loose, easily removable pants.

Place your child on the potty chair whenever he or she signals the need to go to the bathroom. Your child's facial expression may change when he or she feels the need to urinate or to have a bowel movement. Your child may stop any activity he or she is engaged in when the need to go to the bathroom is felt.

Most children have a bowel movement once a day, usually within an hour after eating. Most children urinate within an hour after having a large drink.

In addition to watching for signals that your child needs to urinate or have a bowel movement, place your child on the potty at regular intervals. This may be as often as every one and one-half to two hours.

Stay with your child when he or she is on the potty chair. Reading or talking to your child when he or she is sitting on the potty may help your child relax. Praise your child when he or she goes to the bathroom in the potty chair, but do not express disappointment if your child does not urinate or have a bowel movement in the potty. Be patient with your child. Once your child has learned to use the potty chair, your child can begin using an over-the-toilet seat and a step-up stool.

## How long will it take to toilet train my child?

It may take up to three months. It is important for you to be patient and supportive. Do not punish your child when he or she has an accident.

If your child is not toilet trained within three months, consult your family doctor. The most likely reason your child has not learned to use the potty is that your child is not yet ready for toilet training.

This handout provides a general overview on this topic and may not apply to everyone. To find out if this handout applies to you and to get more information on this subject, talk to your family doctor.



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