

Toilet Training

What is toilet training?

Toilet training, or potty training, is the process when a child learns to control urine and bowel movements. A child who is toilet trained is able to:

- Know that they need to go to the bathroom.
- Control the urge to use the bathroom.
- Go into the bathroom and pull pants and/or underwear down.
- Use the toilet or a potty chair.
- Keep underwear clean and dry during the day and/or night.

How do I know if my child is ready for toilet training?

In general children are ready for the toilet training process between 2 and 3-1/2 years old. Readiness varies from child to child. Parents should not force their child into toilet training. Every child is different and learns at his or her own pace. On average, it takes about eight months for a child to become fully toilet trained. It may take longer for children with speech and language or developmental delays.

When your child displays two or more of the following signs, it is the right time to start “teaching” your child about toilet training.

- Stays dry during a nap.
- Stays dry for two hours or more at a time during the day.
- Wants wet or soiled diapers changed quickly.
- Shows interest in the toilet or potty chair.
- Tells you they need to urinate or have a bowel movement with words, facial expressions or posture.
- Can follow simple directions.

What can I do to help my child?

Buy or borrow a potty-chair or potty seat to place on the toilet seat. If a potty seat is used on the regular toilet, be sure that your child’s legs are not hanging down. Have a stool placed so the child’s legs can rest on something firm. Then, follow the tips on the next page.

What can I do to help my child? (Continued)

1. **Be patient.** If your child sees you are angry or frustrated, they will feel discouraged too. Be prepared - your child may have several accidents after they are toilet trained. Have many clean pairs of underwear on hand for your child to change into.
2. **Be positive.** Celebrate each success your child has. Cheer when your child can put underwear on the right way. Praise your child for sitting on the potty-chair without being asked.
3. **Be creative.** Have your child's dolls and stuffed animals use the potty-chair too. Reward your child with special praise or treats (i.e. hugs, high-five's, a special meal, a telephone call to a grandparent, coloring books). Use children's books and videos to introduce your child to the process of using the potty-chair.
4. **Be consistent.** Try not to switch back and forth from underwear to diapers to Pull-Ups® during the day. This may be confusing for your child. Many children will still wear diapers at night since nighttime training may take an extra 6 to 12 months or longer.

What should I do if training is delayed or my child regresses?

Your child's progress may be delayed or your child may regress and start having accidents. This may be caused by:

- **Illness.**
- **Holidays or vacations.**
- **Stress** such as a change in his or her routine, moving to a new home, the birth of a sibling.
- **Sexual, physical or emotional abuse.**
- **Developmental delays** in your child (prematurely born children may sometimes be delayed in this process).
- **Seasonal changes** such as warm weather that causes children to stay outside to play and not act on the urge to use the bathroom.

Try and help your child relax. Be positive about toilet training. In time, and with your help, your child will get back on track. If stress is causing the problem, you don't want to add more stress by punishing or showing disappointment.

Toilet training is very up-and-down. Your child will have good days and bad days. If you are concerned, talk with your child's doctor or nurse.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to provide you with additional information about your child's care. Diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up should be provided by your health care professional.