

Toilet Training

What is toilet training?

Toilet training, or potty training, is a process. First your child must be able to control bladder and bowel muscles. Then your child needs 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 to start?

In general children are ready for toilet training between 2 and 3-1/2 years old. This will vary from child to child. Parents should not force their child into toilet training. Every child is different and learns at their 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 does two or more of the following, 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 go potty or poop with words, facial expressions or posture.
- Can follow simple directions.



How can I help my child?

Buy or borrow a potty-chair or potty seat to put 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 your child's legs can rest on something firm. Then, follow the tips on the next page.

How can I help my child? (continued)

1. **Be patient.** If you are angry or frustrated, your child may want to quit trying.
2. **Be prepared.** Your child most likely will have accidents after they are toilet trained. Have many clean pairs of underwear on hand for your child to change into.
3. **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.
4. **Be creative.** Have your child's dolls and stuffed animals use the potty-chair too. Reward your child with special praise or treats. Give hugs, high-five's, a special meal, a phone call to a grandparent or a coloring book. Use children's books and videos to introduce your child to the process of using the potty-chair.
5. **Be consistent.** Try not to switch back and forth from underwear to diapers to Pull-Ups® during the day. This may confuse 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 start having accidents. This may be caused by:

- **Illness.**
- **Holidays or vacations.** The excitement or being someplace new can cause your child to regress.
- **Stress** such as a change in your child's 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 be delayed in this process.
- **Seasonal changes.** Warm weather can make children stay outside to play and not act on the urge to use the bathroom.

Try to 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, don't punish or show disappointment. That will only add more stress.

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 help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.