

Toilet Training without Tears

Pediatric Health Promotion



Naval Medical Center

You can consider your child to be toilet trained when he can walk to the potty, undress, urinate or defecate, and pull up his pants without any reminders or help from anyone. Some children learn to control their bladders first; others start with bowel control. Both can be worked on together. Most children become toilet trained between 18 and 30 months of age. The gradual type of toilet training discussed here can usually be completed in two weeks to two months. Most children achieve bladder control first, followed one to three years later by bladder control through the night.

Tips For Success

Don't begin toilet training until your child is clearly ready. Reading special toilet learning books to your child can help. Most children with normal development can be made ready for toilet training by 24 months, many by 18 months. By 3 years of age, your child will probably have trained herself.

Your child is ready for toilet training if the following indications are present:

- Understands what pee, poop, dry, wet, clean, messy, and potty mean. Teach her the vocabulary.
- Understands what the potty is there for. Have her watch parents and older siblings use the toilet correctly.
- Prefers dry, clean diapers. Be sure to change her frequently.
- Likes to be changed. As soon as she is able to walk, teach her to come to you immediately whenever she is wet or dirty to have her diaper changed. Praise her for telling you.
- Understands the connection between dry pants and using the potty: "If you in the potty, your pants will stay nice and dry."
- Can recognize the sensation of a full bladder and the urge to have a bowel movement; that is, she paces, jumps up and down, pulls at her pants, squats down, or tells you. Explain to her what these signals mean: "The poop (or pee) wants to come out. It needs your help." Try to teach her to come to you at these times.
- Your child can postpone briefly the urge to go. She may go off by herself and come back wet or soiled, or wake up from naps dry.

WHEN YOU ARE READY TO BEGIN:

- Adopt a positive, loving approach to toilet training. The keys to successful training are encouragement, patience, praise, and making the process fun.
- Buy a floor level potty chair.
- Make the potty chair one of your child's favorite possessions.
- Synchronize practice runs to the potty with your child's body signals.
- Reward your child for cooperation or success.
- Introduce training pants after your child starts using the potty.
- When your child has an accident, respond sympathetically and change her as soon as it's convenient.
- Avoid physical punishment, yelling, or scolding.