

Toileting Your Toddler



The right time to start toileting is when your child is ready. But how do you know when they are ready? What do you need before starting? And how do you go about starting? Let's go through a quick check of some of the signs of readiness for toileting.

Signs of Readiness

It's important to know that a child will only be ready for toileting when their brain starts to notice the signals coming from their bladder and bowels. This will vary for all children. Some children notice the signals when they are around 2 years old, while other children may be 3 years old. It is important to understand that some children might not be ready to start toilet training until they are 4 years old and may start to show an interest in the toilet or potty long before their body is ready to use the toilet.

Some of the signs are:

- wanting to sit on the toilet/potty
- telling an adult they need to do a wee/poo
- asking to be changed as soon as their nappy is wet/soiled
- hiding when they need to poo
- going a longer time between having a wet nappy (this means that they are able to hold on when they feel the need to wee)
- pulling at their nappy

To make toileting easier for both you and your child, it is best if your child:

- follows simple instructions
- pulls their own pants up and down
- has regular, soft formed bowel movements

Your child may show all or some signs that they are ready. All children are different.

How to Prepare for Toileting

Some people prefer to have things in place, ready to go for when their child decides they want to start toileting. Some things to consider are:

- purchasing underwear (be mindful not to buy too many or too far in advance, as your child may outgrow them by the time they need them);
- choosing if you are going to use a potty or the regular toilet;
- deciding how long you will use a potty, if you choose to use one;
- deciding if you will attach a smaller seat to the toilet or a step for them to use;
- deciding if you will try pull ups first, or even training pants, before moving straight to underwear.



How to Prepare Your Child for Toileting

Learning how to use the potty or toilet is a big step for your child. There are some things to try to get your child ready to use the toilet or potty.

- Make sure they are drinking enough water and having enough fibre. This will ensure a soft stool and will make it easier for them to sit and poo.
- Allow them to watch a trusted adult on the toilet so they can see what happens.
- Show them the potty/toilet seat that you have and how it works.
- When they have pooped in their nappy, you may want to flush the poo down the toilet.
- Teach your child the correct words for using the toilet, introduce the words wee, poo, potty, toilet.
- Before they have a bath/shower for the night, ask if they want to sit on the toilet or potty.
- Encourage them to wash their hands after you have changed their nappy.



How to Prepare Your Child for Toileting

Now your child is showing signs of wanting to use the toilet. You have everything they need and you have prepared your child. It is time to actually start using the toilet.

- It is best to make sure there are no big changes coming up in your child's life as toileting can be stressful for your child.
- It is best to try to plan toileting for when you have a few days at home and can just focus on learning to use the toilet or potty.
- It is best to have loose fitting clothing on your child that is easy to pull up or down. Some people prefer to keep their child in pajama pants or just their underwear for the first few days.
- Once you start, it is best to keep going. Try to use underwear for the daytime and only go back to nappies for naps or bedtime.
- Try and keep to a routine of going to the toilet. Take your child when they wake up in the morning, before or after meal times, a change of activity and before bed.
- Try and look for signs of needing to use the toilet. Your child may start to wriggle, hold onto themselves, fart more than usual or move away from you. When you see these signs, gently guide them to the toilet or potty.
- Once your child is sitting on the toilet, encourage them to sit for several minutes. To keep them still, you could try singing to them or looking at books.
- For boys, you will also need to decide if you are going to teach them to wee while sitting or standing. If you are going to teach standing, they may need something to help them aim, like a ping pong ball in the toilet. This will not flush away. Sitting is easier for boys to learn, as they will be better able to relax their bodies. Also, when children are learning to use the toilet/potty they may poo and wee at the same time, or feel the need to wee but they actually need to poo. If they are sitting, remind them to point their penis down so that the wee doesn't go all around the room.

Once They Go to the Toilet or Potty

- If your child successfully goes to the toilet, praise them and show that you are proud of them.
- If your child misses the toilet/potty or has an accident, remind them in a calm manner that this is okay, messes can be cleaned up and they can try again next time.
- When your child is on the toilet, you may want to wipe them with the toilet paper to begin with, but they will need to learn to do this by themselves. Show them how much toilet paper they will need to wipe their bottom or vagina. Make sure you show how to wipe a vagina from the front and go downwards. Teach your son how to shake the last few drops of urine out of the penis.
- Teach your child to wash their hands after they use the toilet/potty.



Using the Toilet While Out

- If you can, try to stay at home or very close to home for the first few days or the first week. If your child goes to childcare, let the educators know and pack lots of spare clothes.
- If you are visiting friends or family, tell them your child is toileting as you may end up needing to clean up messes. Also, show your child where the toilet is in case they decide to head to the toilet by themselves.
- Before you go anywhere, take your child to the toilet, even if it is only a short car ride. For longer car rides, take them to the toilet when you get to your destination. Try to make sure you know where the toilets are as you may need to get there quickly.
- While you are out, if it has been a while and they haven't told you they need to go, ask them. They may be holding on and not realising as they are too distracted.

Toileting at Night Time

- Once your child has mastered toileting during the day, they may take longer to learn it at night time. Some children may still wear nappies or pull ups for several years after they learn to use the toilet during the day.
- The most common sign of being ready for night time is a dry nappy in the morning. Your child may want to head straight to the toilet to do their morning wee. A good chance that your child is ready for night time toileting is if they are dry for 14 days straight in the morning. An odd wet nappy at night is okay, as your child is still learning.
- To get ready for sleeping with no nappy or pull ups, it is best to have a waterproof mattress protector on the bed. While the bedding may get wet, the mattress will still be dry.
- Your child may still wet the bed on occasion for many years. Bedwetting is common under 10 years of age.

Remember: Your child will only be ready to toilet train when they are ready. Make sure you are prepared by having everything they will need for toileting and talk to them about what to expect. Make using the toilet a positive experience so they find it easy and comfortable.