



Toilet training

Toilet training is about your child learning a set of skills. Making the transition from nappy to potty, or toilet, can result in a sense of achievement for you both.

- By approaching toilet training in a calm, patient manner, you can help your child get to grips with the skills they will need as quickly and smoothly as possible.
 - It is important to remember that every child is different, so try not to compare your child to others. Try not to feel under pressure to 'get toilet training out of the way', but help your child to learn at their pace.
 - Rather than feeling you need to complete toilet training quickly, start working on the skills your child will need as part of their normal day as early as you feel you can. Most children are ready to master potty independence and lead in many parts of the process from around 18 months.
- We've put together some tips and advice to help you support your child as they learn the skills they need to be successful at using the potty or toilet and making the move from nappy to pants.
- Children will often pass urine or open their bowels (wee or poo) just after they wake up, after a feed, drink, or meal. This can be a good time to sit them on the potty or toilet.
 - From about the age of 18 months, your child will begin to recognise the sensation of passing urine and opening their bowels.

More information on Page 2

For additional Parent Tips see www.ihv.org.uk

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- If your child has additional needs this does not mean that you should delay working on the skills needed for toilet training – in fact, starting early has shown to be particularly successful. Becoming toilet trained is about learning a set of skills that can be taught. Children with additional needs may benefit from learning these skills in a more structured way. For guidance on toilet training for children with autism or difficulties related to development, a useful guide can be found at; <https://bit.ly/3odZweh>
- Encourage your child to be interested in the potty or toilet by using potty training books, stories, songs, apps, etc. Talking about toilet training with your little one is a good way to provide reassurance as they start to learn new skills.
- Introduce your child to a potty. Explain what it is for, encourage them to play with it, and try sitting on it so that they get used to the potty before you remove their nappy.
- Start to introduce potty sits into your child's daily routine. Give them attention while they are sitting and gradually build up the number of times a day and length you expect them to sit for. You might need to start with just a few seconds of sitting and gradually build until they will sit for about two to three minutes.
- When your child gets used to the potty, start having potty sits at times of the day when they are most likely to want to have a wee or a poo, such as after a drink or meal, when they first wake up or after a nap.
- Look out for signs that your child is having a wee or poo, such as fidgeting, walking in a funny fashion, pulling a particular face, standing still or going somewhere quiet or hidden and are cues to sit your child on the potty or toilet (with an appropriate seat reducer).
- You could put the potty in the bathroom and sit on the toilet yourself to show your child how it's done.
- You might also like to swap nappies for cloth (washable) trainer pants, which can easily be pulled up and down. Using 'grown up' training pants can be a good way of building confidence in your child if they are a little reluctant to move on from the security of a nappy. Also, the cloth trainer pants will allow your child to feel wet, which will help them learn to recognise signals from their bladder, telling them that they need to do a wee.
- Choose a time when you can be at home most of the time for a few days and are able to give more time to taking your child to the potty or toilet. Removing nappies during the summer months can help to minimise stress for both you and your child. However, do not delay toilet training just because it is the 'wrong time of year'.
- Give your child lots of praise as you go through toilet training together. Your child needs lots of gentle encouragement and praise, as well as regular reminders to use the potty throughout the day.
- Consistency is vital, so it is a good idea to have a few quiet days at home when you first stop using nappies. If you do have to go out, take the potty with you as it's important to keep the momentum going. Your child will become confused if you put them in a nappy for convenience, sending a mixed message that it's okay to wee or poo in their nappy sometimes.
- Encourage your child to sit on the potty after each meal. Even if they don't do anything, it's a good way to encourage bowel movement as digestion is followed by a natural reflex to go to the toilet. Sitting quietly on the potty, perhaps with a book to look at, is a good way to get children used to going on the potty to do a poo.
- Nighttime dryness usually happens within a few months of becoming dry in the day. However, it cannot be taught and should happen naturally. Night-time bladder control may take quite a bit longer to achieve, but most children will be dry at night by the time they are five. However, if your child is not dry at night by their fifth birthday, talk to their healthcare professional, as they may need some additional help and support.
- If toilet training isn't going well, then do speak with your health visitor.

Additional Reading:

You can find lots of reliable advice on overcoming common potty training problems at:

- **Bladder & Bowel UK** - Booklets and Information Leaflets for Children and Young People with Bladder and Bowel Problems: <https://bit.ly/3fZQqsh>
- **NHS - How to potty train:** <https://bit.ly/381DnUu>
- **ERIC - Potty training:** <http://bit.ly/3pcZFJT>
- **Down Syndrome UK:** leaflet entitled "pants4school", specifically supporting children with Down syndrome to be able to use the toilet: <https://bit.ly/407ps8L>

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