

## TOILETING

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### **What is it?**

There are many reasons that toileting can be a challenging skill for a child. Difficulties with motor skills, motor planning and sensory processing can all impact upon a child's ability to access, avoid and/or follow the appropriate toileting steps.

### **Is your child ready? Ask yourself these questions:**

*Does your child seem interested in the potty chair or toilet, or in wearing underwear?*

*Can your child understand and follow basic directions?*

*Does your child stay dry for periods of two hours or longer during the day? Does he or she wake from naps dry?*

*Does your child have fairly predictable bowel movements?*

*Does your child tell you through words, facial expressions or gestures when he or she needs to go?*

*Is your child uncomfortable in wet or dirty diapers?*

*Can your child pull down his or her pants and pull them up again?*

If you answered mostly yes, your child may be ready for potty training. If you answered mostly no, you may want to wait awhile — especially if your child has recently or is about to face a major change, such as a move or the arrival of a new sibling.

### **How can I help the child?**

The following are some strategies that may assist your child with toileting:

#### **Strategies**

☐ Routine and consistency are important. Choose a time when you and your child can be dedicated to toilet training, as you will likely have the most success.

☐ Place a potty chair or potty seat in the bathroom. Encourage your child to sit on the potty chair - with or without a diaper. Ensure that your child is secure on the toilet and their feet rest on the ground or stool. If accessing the toilet is difficult for your child, contact your Occupational Therapist, as there is specialised equipment available.

- ☐ Help your child understand how to talk about the bathroom using simple, correct terms. You might put the contents of a dirty diaper into the potty chair to show its purpose, or let your child see family members of his or her own gender using the toilet.
- ☐ Have your child sit on the potty chair or toilet without a diaper for a few minutes several times a day. Read a potty-training book or give your child a special toy to use while sitting on the potty chair or toilet. Stay with your child when he or she is in the bathroom. Even if your child simply sits there, offer praise for trying — and remind your child that he or she can try again later.
- ☐ Use a visual schedule to help your child sequence the toileting steps.
- ☐ Track your child's elimination patterns to determine the best times to place them on the toilet and/or follow their daycare or school schedule.
- ☐ When you notice signs that your child may need to use the toilet - such as squirming, squatting or holding the genital area- respond quickly. Help your child become familiar with these signals, stop what he or she is doing and head to the toilet. Praise your child for telling you when he or she has to go.
- ☐ Teach girls to wipe carefully from front to back to prevent bringing germs from the rectum to the vagina or bladder. With boys, it is generally easier to start with sitting down and move to standing, as it is more stable and allows them to have bowel movements in the toilet.
- ☐ Reinforce your child's effort with verbal praise, such as, "How exciting! You're learning to use the toilet just like big kids do!" Be positive even if a trip to the toilet isn't successful. As an alternative, incentives could be a sticker chart, special soap just for them or letting your child flush the toilet.
- ☐ It is important that all of your child's caregivers, including baby sitters, child care providers and grandparents, follow your potty-training routine. This includes their schedule, reinforcements and any equipment used.
- ☐ During potty training avoid overalls, belts, leotards or other items that could hinder quick undressing.
- ☐ Have your child take an active role in taking their pants down and pulling them up, as well as washing their hands after toileting.
- ☐ Night-time control may take months or years. In the meantime, use disposable training pants or plastic mattress covers when your child sleeps.

☐ Many children with physical disabilities have problems with constipation and abdominal discomfort, which can interfere with toileting. Consult with your doctor if this is the case.

☐ If your child resists using the potty chair or toilet, is not showing progress and/or it is becoming a power struggle, take a break. You or your child may not be ready yet. Try it again in a few months.

### **Accidents will happen**

Although accidents can be frustrating for everyone involved, it is important to remember that accidents are inevitable, especially when your child is tired/upset or out of their regular routine. Below are some tips in preventing and handling accidents.

☐ If your child has an accident, stay calm and do not scold or discipline your child. You may say, "You forgot this time. Next time you'll get to the bathroom sooner."

☐ Remind your child to relax and take it slow when toileting. Completely emptying the bladder can help prevent accidents.

☐ Accidents often happen when kids are absorbed in activities. To combat this, suggest regular bathroom trips, such as first thing in the morning, after each meal and snack, and before getting in the car or going to bed.

☐ If your child has frequent accidents, absorbent underwear may be best. Keep an extra change of underwear and clothing with your child, especially at school or in child care.