



Is My Child Ready for Toilet Training?

There are many opinions about toilet training and many ways to toilet train. Opinions about toilet training come from people's personal experiences, family traditions and cultural practices. Some children are trained very early (before 24 months of age). Many children are trained later (after their 2nd or 3rd birthdays). Although it is possible to train a younger child, it is much harder and more stressful for the child. Toilet training early may put too much pressure on the child and parent. Children have more success with toilet training when they are older. Most children are ready to be toilet trained some time after their second birthday. Probably the best way to toilet train any child is to make it a positive experience for both parent and child. The first step in successful toilet training is knowing when your child is ready and following your child's lead.

Here are some clues to look for when your child might be ready for toilet training:

- Your child can and will follow verbal directions.
- Your child shows an interest in other family members' bathroom activities.
- Your child communicates in some way (with a word or a sign) that she has a full bladder or is about to have a bowel movement.
- Your child's bowel movements are on a predictable schedule.

If your child is ready, there is information available about toilet training. Even if your child is not quite ready, you can buy her a potty chair and help her get comfortable with this new experience. Tell your child what the potty is for and let your child sit on it (even fully clothed) when she is interested.

Developed for Healthy StepsSM for Young Children by BUSM[®]: Department of Pediatrics, Boston Medical Center



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“We Did It!” Helping to Make Toilet Training a Success

There are many different methods of toilet training children. Children respond to some better than others. What works for one child may not work for another—even if they are siblings! Perhaps the best method for any child is the child-centered approach. A child-centered approach follows the child’s lead and is a positive experience for both parent and child. Every child is ready for toilet training at a different time, so if a parent follows the child’s lead, the first step in toilet training is knowing when the child is ready. When your child is ready, the following child-centered strategies may help.

- **Buy a potty chair.** Stress what a wonderful chair it is. Place it in a place where your child can use it. Explain to your child what the chair is for.
- **Help your child get used to the chair.** Let her sit on it—fully clothed—for a few moments a day. Never force her to sit on it. Try to time it for when she is likely to have a bowel movement.
- **Let your child watch you use the bathroom.** Flush the toilet together (if it doesn’t scare your child) and say “bye-bye” to the waste.
- **Have your child sit on the potty with her diaper off.** Don’t expect results, but if it happens, praise.
- **Together with your child, dump the stool from the diaper into the toilet.** Explain where “the poop” goes. Say “bye-bye” as you flush.
- **Ask your child during the day if she “needs to go potty.”** Look for signs that she is about to go. Tell the child “let’s take off your pants and go potty.” Let your child sit for as long as she wants. Praise success and don’t criticize failure.
- **Praise and support your child for attempts and successes.**
- **When you get a regular pattern of urinating and stooling on the potty, ask your child if she is ready to say bye-bye to diapers.** Make a show of throwing them out and putting on “big kid” training pants.
- **Switch to an over-the-toilet-seat chair once training is established.**
- **Nighttime dryness will take some time after success with daytime training.** Check in with your child now and then by asking her if she is ready for training pants at night.

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