



How Can I Help My Child Stay Dry During The Day?

When it comes to toilet training, children have their own sense of timing and pacing. They may start at any age between two and three years old. Toilet training is a process with many starts and stops. Praise success and be careful not to shame your child for an accident. If one happens, stay calm and ask your child to help you change her into dry clothes. Expect that changes in a routine at child care or a home may cause a setback.

Your child may be ready to begin when he:

- Shows awareness that he has just had a bowel movement, is in the midst of one or is about to have one (that's the one to zero in on!)
- Can stay dry for two to three hours at a time
- Can really follow simple directions
- Can pull his pants or shorts and underwear or "pullups" up and down (leave off the overalls and the tights for now)
- Can use a few simple words to indicate wants and needs

How should you get started?

- Observe your child so you know her particular behavior when she begins to have a bowel movement, then catch her in the act, and point out what she is doing.

- Then you can introduce the potty. You can try several times a day to practice.
- When her diaper is wet, talk about why and associate that with the potty also.
- When he is ready, have your child wear "pullups" or training underpants. This may provide the cue your child needs to stay dry. There will be many accidents at first. Keep trying.
- Decide together what toileting words you want to use. Let other people who care for your child know what these words are and what they mean.
- At first, try toileting your child at routine times during the day: when he first wakes up, before lunch, and after nap time. As you go along, your child will be able to recognize his own needs and tell you when it is time to go to the potty.
- Until your child is fully trained, use diapers when you are away from home because it may take time to find or get to an unfamiliar bathroom.
- Know the location of bathrooms in public places that you frequent, such as the mall or library.
- Your child may ask for your help to toilet even when he can do this on his own. Help him and make it a pleasant time together.

Developed for and adapted from Healthy StepsSM for Young Children by BUSM^F: Department of Pediatrics, Boston Medical Center.



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