



PromoCon

promoting continence and product awareness

an integral service of Disabled Living

Understanding getting ready for toilet training: A Guide for Parents



Toilet / potty training can be hard for families - and is even harder when a child has special needs.

However, having special needs does not mean that your child will not become toilet trained.

Working for the most independent toileting possible is a good goal for all children even though some children may continue to need help staying clean and dry.

Teaching toileting skills to children with special needs often needs to be done in a more planned way. This booklet gives some ideas about how to start toilet teaching with your child.

Contact your Health Visitor or community nurse for advice and support as necessary. For further information contact PromoCon

Note to parents: “wee” and “poo” are used in this booklet to refer to urination and bowel movements.

Getting Ready (around age 1-2 years)

- Try to change your child in or near the bathroom when you can so they can learn that 'weeing' and 'pooing' go with the toilet.
- When you change your child's nappy always talk about 'wee' and 'poo' in a good way e.g. " Good girl you've had a poo!"
- Show a picture of a toilet to your child at each nappy change. These picture cues will help children who may later have communication problems.
- When you empty and flush 'poo' from a nappy into the toilet show and tell your child what you are doing.
- If your child has poor sitting balance ask for an Occupational Therapist to help you find a potty or toilet seat that will help your child sit comfortably.
- If you think your child might be constipated then see your GP or community nurse to get this treated

Developing the skills (age 2-3)

- If you are unsure if your child is ready for toilet training ask your Health Visitor to carry out a toilet skills check to see if your child is ready (Check list available from PromoCon)
- If you haven't already started to introduce your child to toilet or potty sitting, have your child sit on the toilet or potty after meals. Try to do this at least once a day for a few minutes.
- Gradually increase potty/toilet sitting time until your child is happy to sit whenever requested to do so
- Give your child a book, a special small toy, or sing songs while they sit. Toilet sitting needs to be a relaxed time.
- Don't expect your child to "poo" or "wee" at this stage but if they do tell them what they did and show them how pleased you are.
- When you can, keep the bathroom door open so your child can see how other people in your family go to the bathroom as part of their everyday activities.

Promoting healthy bladders and bowels



Encourage regular exercise and eating 5 servings of fruit and vegetables each day.

Have your child sit on the toilet or pott after meals when you can. Sitting should be comfortable. You can give your child a book or small toy to hold while they sit.



Encourage your child to drink water based drinks during the day (try for 6 glasses).

Raising Awareness

- If your child uses disposable nappies they may never feel wet. Feeling wet is an important part of the toilet learning process. Feeling wet helps children connect 'weeing' with feeling wet.
- Try placing a pad of paper towel in your child's nappy to help them feel wet. Some children get very comfortable in their nappy and don't like to give them up. Feeling wet will make them a little less comfortable.
- The paper towel will also help you tell more easily when your child is wet. Try checking your child's nappy frequently when you are at home to see how often they 'wee'.
- Start to teach your child the difference between the feel of wet and dry. Tell them when they are wet. Ask them to tell you when they are wet.
- Always change your child's nappy with them standing up if possible as this enables them to take an active part in the process – such as pulling pants up and down and starting to learn to wipe their bottoms.
- Encourage your child to wash and dry their hands and dress themselves.
- Read stories about using the toilet

Example of a baseline chart

day/time	Day 1		Day 2		Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
	N	F	N	F			
07.00							
08.00							
09.00							
10.00							
11.00							
12.00							
13.00							
14.00							
15.00							
16.00							
17.00							
18.00							
19.00							

W = wet
 D = Dry
 P = Poo

N = Nappy
 F = Drinks

The Training Process

(once your child will happily sit on the toilet and can stay dry for about 2 hours)

- Stop using nappies. Use washable training pants or normal underwear and put waterproof pants over them.
- Start recording when your child 'wee's' and 'poos'. Check their pants every hour for at least 2-3days. Plan to do this when you will be at home for a few days and can get a good record. Use the chart to keep track.
- Take your child to the potty at scheduled times based upon the pattern you see on the chart.
- Ideas to make 'weeing' in the toilet fun
 - Put a few drops of food coloring in the bowl and let your child see how 'weeing' changes the colour
 - Encourage boys who can stand to stand and aim at targets in the toilet (a few cheerios or screwed up toilet paper make good targets)
 - Make a reward chart and give special stickers everytime your child 'wees' or 'poos' in the toilet.
 - A musical potty can also provide motivation



Blowing bubbles can help your child stay busy while they sit on the toilet or potty.
It may also help them have a bowel movement.

Further information

PromoCon

Disabled Living

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PromoCon, working as part of Disabled Living Manchester, provides impartial advice and information regarding a whole range of products, such as musical potties and other toilet training equipment and swimwear and washable trainer pants for children who have delayed toilet training.

Information is also available regarding which services and resources are available for both children and adults with bowel and/or bladder problems

This booklet gives simple suggestions to help you start the potty/toilet training process.

Titles of other booklets currently available in this series:

‘Understanding constipation in infants and toddlers’

‘Understanding toilet refusal – the child who will only poo in a nappy’

‘Understanding bedwetting’

‘Understanding Toilet Training resources’

Other resources available from PromoCon which you may find helpful include:

‘One step at a time’ – a toilet training resource for parents of children with learning difficulties

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