

Toilet training tips

Toilet training can be a tricky time. There is a huge variation in when children will be ready to come out of nappies. Anything between 18 months and nearly 3 years is not unusual. The word "training" is misleading. Children can only come out of nappies when they are physically ready. If the timing is correct, most children will be clean and dry within a week. Too early means lots of accidents and the danger of everyone becoming frustrated. On the other hand, if children are left in nappies too long, they become used to being in soiled and wet nappies.

Top tips for supporting children's move away from nappies

- Look out for signs that children are urinating or pooing. Talk to children about what is happening using simple language, for example, "your wee wee is coming out" or "I can smell something. Maybe your poo is on its way".
- Talk about getting children 'comfortable' rather than 'clean' when changing nappies or clearing up accidents. This can prevent some children from feeling shame.
- Do not start toilet training until you are sure that children can hold urine for at least one and a half hours, preferably two, and that they are releasing it in a "flood". Watch out as well for dry nappies after naps. This shows that the bladder is mature. It's best not to wait too long to get out of nappies after a child has bladder maturation.

The toilet training process - doing a wee

- Start by putting a child in pants and show them where the potty is. Don't make too much of a fuss about it.
 - Wait for around an hour since the child last urinated and then suggest that perhaps a wee wee will be ready.
- Help children understand the signals that their body is showing them. If you see signs that a child might need to urinate help to explain it by saying things such as "when you are wriggling like that, it means that your wee wants to come out."
 - Expect that there will be accidents at first. When there are accidents, say something such as "your wee-wee came out before you were ready."
- Persist for two days, but do not continue unless there are more 'wins' than 'loses'.
 - Unlike adults, children only feel the signs that they need to urinate when their bladder is already very full. They will not be able to wait. Move quickly!

The toilet training process - doing a poo

- When it comes to poo, the most important thing is that children do not become constipated. Once children have become constipated they associate passing a stool with pain. This in turn prevents them from relaxing and allowing the stool to be moved.
- Try to add more water and vegetables into the diet to help prevent constipation.
- Work out if there is a pattern to a child's bowel movements before starting toilet training. This will help you anticipate when the child is likely to need to do a poo.
- Take the lead from children. Some children do not want adults near them when they pass a stool, others want to be distracted or reassured.
- If a child is desperate but wants the nappy back on – let them have it. It is better to take time over the process than have them become constipated.
- If child seems only want to wear nappies to do a poo, try lining a potty with a nappy, putting on the nappy increasingly loosely or even cutting a large hole in the back of the nappy.