



# Toilet Training



Being toilet trained is an important milestone. For a child, it's a step towards independence.

For parents, not having to change nappies anymore or buy them is great — they're expensive! It also takes patience and positivity. Some children may be hypersensitive. Others may have poor interoception: that is, being able to sense what's happening in their body, like if they are hungry or tired or need to go to the toilet.

Many neurological processes happen to let a person know it's time to go to the toilet. For urination, the bladder fills and stretches so there is a sense of fullness. Muscles tighten to hold on... and after a point, we know it is time to go. If a child has a neurological delay, neurological processes may also be delayed.

Encourage your child to take 'big drinks' instead of lots of little sips during the day. This helps build up a full bladder and provide clear sensory information needed to go to the toilet.

- Instead of disposing of a soiled nappy, show your child tipping the poo into the toilet to communicate "this is where it belongs."
- Allow your child to watch family members using the toilet and to model the routines if they feel comfortable with it. This could be effective to show them how toileting works.
- Include all the steps of toileting: dressing, washing hands, flushing the toilet, so it all comes together as one process.
- If your child is scared to wipe, put their hand on top of yours and wipe to practise the action— with your hand being the closest to their bottom. Once they're comfortable, you can swap sides.
- Start with the last wipe, then give a reward. Gradually add the last two, the last three wipes until they are doing it all independently.
- Give lots of praise (for children who respond positively to praise).

## Timing and clothing

Summer may be a good time to start toilet training. Children can wear less clothing layers, which makes the process easier. Clothes during the early stages must be easy to take off. Consider:

- Toileting pants that are slightly absorbent and help transition from nappies to underwear
- Wearing underpants and then nappies

These will help increase awareness of feeling wet and needing to be changed. Nappies absorb everything, so there's no wet sensation for the child.

Elasticised pants or shorts so children can master pulling pants up and down. Buttons and zippers can make this difficult and discourage them from participating.



# So how will you know when your child is ready?



## Skills needed for toilet training

Consider whether your child can do or is ready to learn the following:

### 1. Motor skills

- Getting to the toilet/potty safely
- Getting on and off the toilet safely
- Balancing and staying in a comfortable seated position on the toilet
- Reaching behind and wiping their bottom, flushing the toilet, pulling pants up
- Accessing the basin and taps to wash and dry hands

### 2. Attention span

- Remaining seated on the toilet for two to three minutes or standing until they need to release
- Remembering to follow all the steps in the correct order to complete the toileting process

### 3. Language

- Expressing their need to go to the toilet or clean up after an accident
- Understanding the instructions associated with going to the toilet and the purpose

### 4. Social skills

- Recognising appropriate places and times to go to the toilet

### Medical issues

Chronic constipation can have a significant impact on toilet training. It can be a painful and scary experience when children are on the toilet. The memory of it could make them want to stay with the security of using nappies. Constipation can be due to dietary difficulties, such as a lack of fibre in children's diets. Always talk to a paediatrician or GP to ensure there are no underlying health issues.

**Getting Ready For Toilet Training Activities & Strategies, Early Childhood Development, Independence, Plumtree House / By Plumtree / February 6, 2020**  
<https://plumtree.org.au/blog/getting-ready-for-toilet-training/>