



# Bladder & Bowel UK

Supporting people with bladder and bowel problems

part of Disabled Living

## Understanding Getting Ready For Potty Training A guide for parents



Toilet/ potty training can prove to be difficult for some families - and even more so when a child has additional needs.

However, having additional 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 additional 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.

## **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 have communication problems, or difficulties with understanding.
- Empty any 'poo' from the nappy into the toilet, flush and 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 allow your child to sit comfortably.
- If you think your child might be constipated then see your GP or community nurse to get this treated

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

## **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 Bladder and Bowel UK).
- 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 short time.
- Gradually increase the frequency and amount of time that your child is sitting on the potty/toilet until they are happy to sit whenever they are asked to.
- 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 toilet, as part of their everyday activities.

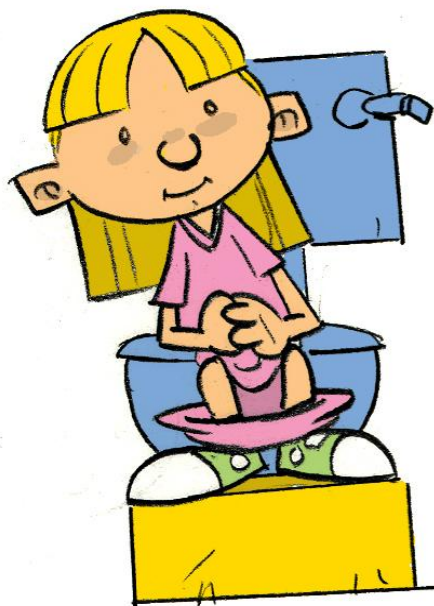
## Promoting healthy bladders and bowels



Encourage regular exercise and eating 5 portions of fruit and vegetables each day

Have your child sit on the toilet or potty 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 record 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							

D = Dry  
P = Poo

F = Drinks  
N = Nappy

## The Training Process

- Stop using nappies. Use washable training pants or normal underwear with a small pad in them
- Start recording when your child 'wee's' and 'poos'. Check their pants every hour for at least 3 days. 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 every time 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

Bladder and Bowel UK

Disabled Living

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Website: [www.bladderandbowel.co.uk](http://www.bladderandbowel.co.uk)

Bladder and Bowel UK, 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 services and resources that are available for both children and adults with bowel and/or bladder problems

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

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’

Other resources available from Bladder and Bowel UK which you may find helpful include:

‘Talk about toilet training’ – an information package to help support successful toilet training

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

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Les Eaves - Illustrations

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