

Potty Training

Patience is the most important skill for this milestone

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If your child is between 2 and 3 years old, it may be time to start teaching him or her how to use the toilet.

Before you start this important developmental milestone, you need to find out whether your child is ready. Your child might be ready to start potty training if he/she has one or more of the following physical signs:

- has a dry diaper for at least 2 hours a day or is dry after naps;
- has bowel movements (BMs) at regular times each day; and
- makes sounds (like grunting) and movements (squatting, bending over) when making a BM.

A child also must be emotionally and mentally ready to start potty training. Some signs of emotional readiness include:

- telling you when he/she has a dirty diaper (made pee-pee or poopy);
- wants to be changed when wet/dirty;
- shows interest in the toilet, how it works and how to use it;
- asks to go potty;
- can help undress him/herself;
- can follow simple instructions; and
- wants to wear “big kid” underwear.

If your child strongly resists your attempts to “go potty,” it’s best to wait a while before starting training again.

Unless the child is making good progress, you should delay potty training during stressful situations, like moving to a new home, having a new baby, a major illness, recent death or other family crisis.

Active Training

Once you determine your child is ready to start potty training, you will need the following items:

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- Child-size potty chair and/or a child-size seat that fits on a regular toilet seat. Potty chairs tend to work better because the child does not have to climb onto it, and his/her feet can stay on the floor.
- Pull-up diapers and/or training pants. You may keep using diapers overnight.
- You should make trips to the potty part of the daily routine. When your child seems to need to urinate or have a BM, go to the potty.

Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement is one of the keys to potty training success. In the beginning, praise your child for telling you when he/she has wet a diaper or made a BM.

Explain what you want to happen. Encourage your child with lots of hugs and praise when success occurs.

Training pants, or pull-ups, can help potty training and give your child added confidence and a sense of being “a big kid.” You should be prepared to clean up “accidents,” however.

Remember, every child is different when it comes to toilet training. Some kids train quickly; others need more time and help to succeed. Parents should never force their child to sit on the potty or punish them if they have an accident.

Words of Advice

Toilet training takes time. Most children achieve bowel control and daytime urine control by 3-4 years of age. However, it may take longer for them to stay dry overnight. Most girls and more than 75 percent of boys can stay dry overnight after age 5. n

Resources for this article can be accessed at www.advanceweb.com/nurses. Click on Education, then References.

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