

## **Toilet training**

When to start potty training will depend on the individual child. Every child is different; they learn to walk and talk at different times and they learn how to use the toilet at different times too. There are many skills involved in the process of going to the toilet independently including balance, coordination, body awareness, hand function, dressing skills and language skills.

### **Strategies to support**

- Consider whether child is physically ready: - Can they sit on the potty and stand up? - Are they able to follow simple instructions? - Do they show awareness that their nappy is wet or soiled?
- Get your child involved with the process when changing their nappy. Change them standing up and practice pulling up/down trousers. Encourage the routine of washing your hands together when you've finished.
- Make it fun. Introduce books about potty training. Incorporate their favourite teddy so it can be practiced in play.
- Talk about wee and poo. Tell them if their nappy is wet or dry when you change them and talk it.
- Show them that you do wees and poos too. Watching other family members using the toilet helps the child see the process and routines. Leave the toilet door open. Young children learn by watching and copying.
- Demonstrate how the toilet flush works. Let them watch and then practice.
- Empty the content of the potty in the toilet so they can see where it goes.
- Keep the potty or trainer seat in an accessible place.
- Plan a reward system like a sticker chart. Reward every little step towards potty training i.e. pulling down trousers or washing their hands.
- Keep a plastic step to hand so that the child can rest their feet when sat on the toilet. This will support their balance and help getting on and off.

Further advice can be found from the children's bowel and bladder charity website. [www.eric.org.uk](http://www.eric.org.uk)

### **Bottom wiping**

Many children with co-ordination problems have difficulty with bottom wiping and the process of going to the toilet. This can often cause high levels of anxiety for both child and parent. The following strategies can be used to learn bottom wiping and assist with toileting.

- Encourage your child to get into a rhythm of going to the toilet so they don't feel rushed. After a meal there is a gastro-colic reflex that stimulates the bowel, so this may be a good time to try and set up a routine. Encouraging your child to go after breakfast may reduce the anxiety of needing to go at school.
- Be aware of the impact of your child's diet on their stools and ability to sense they need the toilet. Avoiding drinking can cause constipation. The fibre in fruit and vegetables makes stools bulkier.
- Support your child to sit in a good position on the toilet. If your child's feet don't touch the floor, they would benefit from a step under their feet to help them maintain their posture.
- Use a mirror in the bathroom to give the child an additional visual cue when wiping their bottom.
- Provide opportunities and allow the child times to practice when he/ she is not in a rush for school etc.
- Wet wipes are good to use when learning bottom wiping as they wipe more easily and cover a larger surface area.
- Getting undressed independently may be difficult for your child, encourage and practice the fastening on your child's trousers.
- To assist with the twisting skills needed for bottom wiping, play games with a ball where the child passes it round their body swapping hands as it passes behind their back.
- Play games with clothes pegs where pegs are placed on the back of the child's clothes including around their bottom area. The child must keep their feet still whilst twisting and reaching to find and remove the pegs.