

# POWER OF KNOWING

An educational resource for patients and families.

## HELPING YOUR CHILD WITH TOILET TRAINING

### The unknown is scarier than the known

Toilet training can be stressful and challenging for some children and families and an exciting time for others. Achieving this life skill brings a sense of confidence and independence for children. Knowing about development, the signs of being ready and how to support the process can reduce stress and help children achieve this skill.

### Understanding Development:

- Children typically toilet train between 18 months and 3.5 years however being ready is not determined by age. It is determined by the body system and the child's desire.
- Children are learning self-control in this stage. A caregiver's response to accidents and toilet training influences how children view themselves: as independent and confident or with a sense of shame and doubt.



### Keep in mind:

- Accidents and set backs are normal and expected in the learning process. They will stop with confidence and mastery.
- Toilet training is unique to the child and family. It is a life skill that parents need to initiate and take responsibility for just like feeding skills.
- Communication with daycare providers is a must for success. Share your plan before you start the process.
- The role of daycare providers is to support your plan and process. This provides consistency and routine for the child.
- Consult your doctor before toilet training if you feel a medical issue is present (stools are too hard, too soft, too little, too much, pain).

### Child Life Services

A child life specialist is available to provide more support. To schedule services please email: [khchildlife@fakeeh.care](mailto:khchildlife@fakeeh.care).

## Suggested Resources

Search: Toilet Training

[Zero to Three](#)



[American Academy of Pediatrics](#)



[Child Development Institute](#)



[Autism Speaks](#)



["7 Potty Training Mistakes Moms Make and How to Avoid Them"](#)  
[www.cafemom.com](http://www.cafemom.com)



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### Signs showing your child is ready to toilet train:

If your child shows several of these signs consistently, your child may be ready. The more signs you see, consistently over time, the easier the process will be.

- Dry 2-4 hours in the day and no bowel movement most nights.
- Can walk / pull up pants and push down pants.
- Gives indication (behavior). Tells you when they need a diaper change.
- Does not like feeling wet or soiled.
- Follows simple instructions.
- Can imitate adults around them.
- Shows interest in the process.

### Ways to support the process:

- Parents must be committed and ready. Do your research (determine plan and know your child's schedule for dry, wet and bowel movement).
- Avoid training during big changes (new baby, new school/class, new move).
- Start process over long weekend with no plans or outings for several days. Only focus is toilet training. Avoid using diaper. Use thick training pants.
- Dress for success (easy on and off).
- Make the bathroom a fun place to be.
- Expect a mess and accidents. Prepare for this mentally.
- Never punish or use shame. Never force. This will cause set back.
- Increase fluids and fiber. Decrease dairy.
- For boys – start with sitting (with consistent success introduce standing).
- Praise all efforts (verbal, small reward).
- Consistency and Routine is a must.

### Challenges and Set Backs:

- Determine the root cause (fear, pressure, control).
- Play! Play! Play! (model toilet skills with a doll, favorite character).
- If culturally acceptable, allow child to be with you in the bathroom. Children learn by seeing adults model behavior.
- When it becomes too stressful, stop. Return to training after a month or two as your child becomes more interested and is showing more signs.

### Helpful Activities:

Role play with a favorite doll or stuffed animal

Explain the body system in simple words (some children fear they are losing a part of themselves)

Target Games for Boys  
(Use 1 square of toilet paper as a target)

Color changing water

Read books about toilet skills

Flushing games and flushing songs



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### Tips: when your child refuses BM on the toilet

- Make Poop Recipe (**Not to eat**): 1 1/2 cups ground cinnamon, 1 cup applesauce, 1/4 cup white school glue (like Elmer's). Looks like poo (but smells like cinnamon). Put in bag, cut corner and explain how body works.
- Experiment: 2 ziploc bags with shredded wheat cereal. Add 1 cup of water to one bag. Add 2 Tablespoons of water to the second. Mix in bag. Cut hole in corner to see "poop" come out.
- Grapes & Bananas – we want to have poop that looks more like bananas.
- Garbage: Our bodies make "garbage" too. Help children understand more about the system, letting go of poop helps our bodies.
- Using diaper to transition - move to next step with consistent success.
  1. Poop in diaper in preferred location → bathroom (preferred position)
  2. Poop in diaper while sitting → sitting on toilet
  3. Poop in loose/open diaper while sitting on toilet. Or cut hole.
  4. Poop in toilet without diaper.
- Humor - silly poop faces and sounds. Kids love it when adults get silly.
- Use diaper/plastic doll play (using yellow food coloring, chocolate candy bar, chocolate pudding in different diapers), cleaning with wipe/washcloth.
- Constipation and Soiling with school age children - "Sneaky Poo"...be a detective to beat sneaky poo. Use following link (read parent section first).  
[http://www.narrativetherapylibrary.com/media/downloadable/files/links/b/e/beating-sneaky-poo-1\\_2.pdf](http://www.narrativetherapylibrary.com/media/downloadable/files/links/b/e/beating-sneaky-poo-1_2.pdf)

**There is a lot of FUN and GROWTH in play that is messy.**

### Helpful Books:

Everyone Poops  
by Taro Gomi

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Where's the Poop  
by Julie Markes

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On My Potty  
by Leslie Patricelli

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Once Upon a Potty  
by Alona Frankel



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