Talk about getting ready for potty training -A Guide for Parents

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Toilet/potty training can often seem a challenge for some families - particularly if your child has additional special needs.

However, having special needs will not necessarily mean that your child will not be able to become toilet trained, although a number of children may always need help and support to remain clean and dry.

Any toilet training, however will need to be undertaken in a more structured way. This booklet will give you some ideas. Ask your health professional (e.g. Health Visitor) for further advice and support

Getting Ready (around age 1-2 years)

- When changing your child's nappies always talk about wees and poos in a positive way e.g. "Good girl you've done a poo!"

- Try and always change your child in/near the bathroom so they connect wees/poos with the toilet

- Showing a picture of a toilet at each nappy change will help with visual communication if your child has problems talking later on

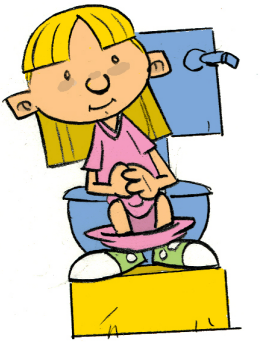
- Show your child and talk about what you are doing when the contents of a soiled nappy are being flushed down the toilet

- If your child is known to have poor sitting balance and will probably require support to sit on a potty discuss with your occupational therapist any equipment your child may need

Promoting healthy bladders and bowels

Encourage regular exercise and 5 potions of fruit and vegetables per day

Give opportunities for the child to sit on the toilet/potty if possible at regular intervals during the day. Starting with after meals is best



Encourage at least 6 regular water based drinks throughout the day

Developing the right skills (age 2-3 years)

- Ask your health professional e.g. Health visitor to carry out a toileting skills check list to see if you child needs any specific help
- Introduce your child to the potty gradually, for example after meals or before getting in the bath
- Do not force your child to sit on but encourage to sit on for increasing times up to about 2 minutes. This can be achieved by engaging the child in a 'nice' activity such as reading a story or singing games
- Do not expect your child to 'produce' anything at this stage but just to get used to happily sitting on the potty/toilet
- If your child does however manage to use the potty then give plenty of praise, but do not make an issue if nothing happens
- Have an 'open door policy' in the bathroom so that the child can see other members of the family going to the loo as part of normal everyday activities

Blowing bubbles will help keep your child occupied whilst sat on the toilet and will also encourage bowel movements

Raising Awareness

- If your child uses disposable nappies these have super absorbency so that the child never feels wet. This means they miss out on an important learning process. Put something like a folded kitchen paper towel (one that does not disintegrate when wet!) in the nappy so that the child will feel when they have passed urine

- Do this on days you are not going out - or involve your child's nursery and formally check the pad in the nappy every hour and record if wet or dry and when they have done a poo

- Start to teach your child the difference between 'wet' and 'dry'. Encourage your child to indicate when they are wet

- Involve your child with flushing the toilet and encourage self help skills such as washing hands and pulling pants up and down

Example of 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							

W = wet
D = Dry
P = Poo

N = Nappy
F = Drinks

The Training Process

If you feel you will need help with this do get in touch with your Health Visitor or Paediatric Continence Advisor

- Remove the nappy
- Use washable waterproof trainer pants or absorbent disposable pads in normal underwear instead of nappies
- Keep a record when your child wees and poos
- Try taking your child to the potty/toilet at regular times based on the time interval
- Use 'targets' in the toilet to encourage little boys to stand to wee
- Try a few drops of different food colouring in the cistern each time they flush - to encourage the child to use the toilet with flushing as a reward
- Incentive charts with stickers and musical potties can also be used as incentives
- Think of other things you could use as a reinforcer

Further information

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PromoCon, 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 which services and resources are available for both children and adults with bowel and/or bladder problems

This booklet gives simple suggestions to help you start the potty/toilet training process.

Titles of other booklets currently available in this series:

'Talk about going to the toilet'
'Talk about constipation'
'Talk about daytime wetting'
'Talk about bedwetting'

Illustrations
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