

## Toilet Training

Toilet training, or potty training, needs to start when your child is ready. They'll likely start showing signs that they're ready when they're 18 to 24 months old. Some may not be ready until they're around 3 years old. This is common.

### Signs Your Child Is Ready to Potty Train

- Stands and walks along
- Knows when they need to pee or poop
- Grabs at their diaper
- Has a regular pooping schedule
- Lets you know when their diaper is full
- Takes their diaper off
- Follows 2- or 3-step instructions
- Talks about using a regular toilet or wearing underwear
- Brings you a clean diaper
- Stays dry more than 2 hours or during naps
- Shows they understand peeing and pooping is related to the potty or bathroom

### When to Start

- When you think your child is ready to start potty training:
  - Set aside time for them to learn. Praise them when they do well. Be gentle with them and understanding when they have accidents. Accidents will happen. Potty training may take 3 to 6 months.
  - Don't force them to stay on the toilet until they pee or poop. Have them go potty when they wake up, every 30 or 45 minutes, and when they feel they need to go.
  - Show them how you sit on the toilet. Have them go to the bathroom with you or a sibling. They learn best by watching you.

- At first, stay with your child when they use the potty. In time, they will stay alone.
- Dress them in loose-fitting pants and training pants.
- Let them help by letting them tear off the toilet paper. Later, they may want to stand and pull up their pants.
- Do not flush the toilet while they're sitting on it. They may not understand that their body is bigger than the seat hole and think they'll fall in.
- Some things can make it harder for your child to start potty training. If there are too many changes at one time, they can feel stressed. They may take longer to learn or not try at all. Wait to potty train if:
  - A new sibling was born.
  - They're sick, especially if they're having diarrhea.
  - The family is moving.
  - They're switching from a crib to a bed.
  - They will be traveling soon.

## Potty Chairs and Seats

Potty chairs and seats help your child get familiar with using a toilet. When they're ready to start potty training, have them help with picking out a chair or seat. Getting them involved can help them feel more excited about potty training.

- Potty chairs are small, standalone toilets that sit on the floor (Picture 1). It should be low enough so your child can place their feet firmly on the floor. This makes pooping easier.
- Potty seats sit on or attach to your regular toilet (Picture 2). Some may have armrests and back support to help your child feel secure and not be afraid of falling. If your child's potty seat doesn't have a step stool attached, have them use a footstool to get up on the toilet and to put their feet on.



**Picture 1** Potty chair



**Picture 2** Potty seat

## Hygiene

- Teach your child to wash their hands with soap and water after using the potty (Picture 3).
- When using a potty chair, empty it into the toilet after each use. Wash it with a disinfecting cleaner, like Lysol®, then rinse and dry it with paper towels. Store all cleaning supplies out of the reach of children and pets.



**Picture 3** Teach your child to always wash their hands after using the potty.

## Rewards

Children learn faster if you reward them for succeeding when they use the potty. Some examples include:

- Putting stickers on a sticker chart.
- Keeping a few of your child's toys in a box where they cannot reach them. After they have success, give them a toy they have not seen for a while to play with.
- Give a reward when your child has their first dry day.

## Other Tips

- Do not give your child toys to play with while sitting on the potty chair. Toys can distract them from using the potty.
- Do not expect your child to sit on the potty longer than a few minutes at a time.
- At first, your child may not stay dry all night. It's okay to use diapers at bedtime.
- Wearing big kid pants is often important to a child. Your child should be able to pull these pants on and off easily.
- Make going to the potty relaxing. Encourage your child to let their pee or poop come out rather than pushing or trying really hard. Pushing too hard may tighten their sphincter muscle, making it harder to poop.
- If your child goes to a babysitter or child care center, ask them to use the same potty-training routine you use at home. Being consistent helps them learn.