

# Toilet Training

**Timing is everything! Starting toilet training before your child is ready will frustrate both of you. Some children will be ready to begin toilet training at 18 months; others may not be ready to begin until 24 or 36 months.**

## Get Ready

Knowing when to start is important. Make sure your child:

- Has a regular and predictable bowel movement schedule
- Has a diaper that is not always wet, stays dry at least two hours at a time during the day or is dry after naps
- Can follow simple instructions and can undress herself
- Shows an interest in imitating other family members in the bathroom
- Recognizes the feeling of a full bladder and the urge to have a bowel movement through facial expressions, posture or words



## Get Set

When your child is ready, take her to the store to pick out a potty chair. (The floor-level types are best.) Also, let your child choose stickers or stars you can use for charting successful potty trips.

Next, let your child become familiar with the potty chair outside the bathroom, using it as a special chair while fully clothed. Proceed with toilet training only after your child has developed good feelings for the chair. Read children's books about potty training together.

## Start Training

Let your child practice using the potty whenever he gives a signal that he needs to go, such as pulling at his pants or jumping up and down. Also practice after naps and 20 minutes after meals.

Let your child walk to the potty and sit on it with his pants off. If he is ready to get up after a minute, fine. Never force the issue.

## Stay Positive

Recognize all cooperation with encouragement. Do not mention his mistakes along the way. Your goal is to make this process as positive, natural and non-threatening as possible.

Teach your child to wash his hands after each use of the potty.

## Never Punish

Never punish, scold or yell at a child for accidents or use negative terms to describe pee or poop. This will likely hinder his progress. Children may regress if toilet training creates pressure. Instead give positive messages like, "You did it! You went in the potty."

## Slow and Steady Wins

After your child uses the potty by himself two or more times, stop "practicing" so your child can teach himself to get to the potty in time. **Accidents will still occur at this point.** Change your child as soon as it happens and be sympathetic: "Accidents happen to everyone. You'll do better next time." This stage usually lasts several months.

## The Finish Line

When your child uses the potty at least 50 percent of the time, you can switch from diapers to real underwear during the day. Let the child choose the underwear and celebrate the milestone. Using training pants or disposable pants rather than diapers at nap time and bedtime may help. Limit fluid intake right before bed. Encourage your toddler to use the potty immediately before going to bed and as soon as he wakes up.

For more information on health-related topics, visit our health library at [CHKD.org/healthlibrary](http://CHKD.org/healthlibrary).

**Your child's pediatrician should be your primary source of advice about your child's health.**