

Toilet Training

Recently, many of the phone calls taken by Mary Cronin, our early intervention advisor, have been about toilet training. As this is a common issue, Mary kindly sourced this article. Thanks to the NDSS for allowing us to reprint here.

Nicola Hart, DSI

Step 1: Determining A Child's Toilet Readiness

Many parents are eager to start a toilet training program for their children. However, some parents may be ready to start before their children are ready. Starting before a child displays the necessary readiness signs will most likely increase the amount of time it takes for the child to learn this skill as well as decrease the amount of success the child experiences. Starting too early can also lead to other problems, such as an increase in undesirable behaviours related to toilet training and high frustration levels in the parent. To ease the toilet training process and ensure that it is a positive experience for everyone involved, it is recommended that parents assess their child's toilet readiness skills. Important signals of readiness are as follows:

- 1. Age** - The child has reached an appropriate age. It is recommended to wait until after the second birthday to begin considering toilet training. For children with Down syndrome, it has been found beneficial to wait until after the third birthday to begin the process. While age is an important component of readiness, parents should consider other factors as well when considering toilet training.
- 2. Bladder Control** - The child completely empties his or her bladder when voiding and remains dry for at least one and one half hours during the day.
- 3. Predictable Stooling Patterns** - The child's bowel movements follow a regular and predictable pattern.
- 4. Motor Skills** - The child demonstrates the abilities to walk to and from the bathroom independently and to pick up objects.
- 5. Behaviour** - The child can sit on the toilet (or potty chair) comfortably for two to five minutes. He or she may be allowed to look at preferred books or play with preferred toys while sitting on the toilet.
- 6. Instructional Readiness** - The child can follow a few simple directions (e.g. sit down).
- 7. Indicates Needs** - Through facial expressions, postures, gestures, pictures or words, the child indicates needing to go to the bathroom.

Step 2: Determining Your Readiness

Before starting a toilet training program, parents need to be ready to dedicate time and effort to implement an effective program. If their child displays the necessary readiness signs but their own schedules do not allow them the amount of time needed to take their child to the bathroom on a consistent schedule every day, they may want to consider waiting to start until their schedules allow time.

Below is a form to help parents assess their child's bladder control, ability to demonstrate a need to go, and voiding pattern. Every 30 to 60 minutes, parents should check their child's diaper. They can then place a checkmark in each corresponding time slot that the child indicated a need to go. They should keep the data for two weeks. If, at the completion of two weeks, the chart shows that their child consistently remained dry for at least one and one half hours, consistently indicated a need to go, and displayed a voiding pattern, then the child may be ready for toilet training. If after two weeks, the data show that the child does not display the necessary skills, parents can decide to continue taking data or to stop and restart at a later date.

Toilet Training Readiness Data Sheet

Hour	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
6:00am							
6:30am							
7:00am							
7:30am							
8:00am							
8:30am							
9:00am							
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5:30pm							
6:00pm							
6:30pm							
7:00pm							
7:30pm							
8:00pm							
8:30pm							

Code:



= Indicated need

D= Dry

U=Urinated

BM= Bowel Movement

U/BM= If both



Step 3: Get set, go!

1. Your days should look like this: Wake up, take off wet diaper, go to the bathroom. Put on big boy underwear or big girl panties.
2. Go to the bathroom when you anticipate need to urinate or to stool. (Refer to your Toilet Training Readiness Data Sheet.)
3. Make it fun! Allow your child to read a favourite book or play with a favourite toy while sitting on the toilet.
4. Use a visual schedule to reinforce verbal directions to child.
5. Use a reinforcer.
6. Change your reinforcers from time to time.

- NDSS thanks Karen Summar, MD for providing this information.

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Children who have Down syndrome sometimes take a bit longer to be fully toilet trained, meaning that larger sized nappies are needed. See below for an update on lobbying for HSE provision of continence products for children.

HSE confirm development of national guidelines for provision of continence products for children

We have had a number of concerned parents contacting us about their children who are not receiving age appropriate nappies from the Health Services Executive.

Nappies provided by the HSE are not available for older children and the sizes provided are not suitable. Moreover, the provision of nappies, referred to as continence products by the HSE, varies nationally. We contacted the HSE calling for answers on behalf of our members.

In response, the HSE outlined that children who require continence products are provided with these products under the Community Funded Schemes. They said there is a National Reform Programme currently underway reviewing all aspects of service provision under these schemes. As part of this, a working group has been established to undertake a full review of the operation of the service 'including the specification of product requirements for children of all ages'.

They added that the work of the group will involve the development of national guidelines which will ensure 'uniformity of approach in the provision of continence products at local level'.

They envisage that the Guidelines will be introduced in late 2016. We will update you if and when they are introduced.

Cathy Gray, DSI