

Support with Potty Training

The following is taken from *Eric's guide to potty training*

How do you know when to start?

- Every child is different— they learn to walk and talk at different times, and to be clean and dry at different times. You know your child best so don't feel that you have to start potty training just because other people are!
- Choose the right time not only for your child but for you too...if you're busy with a new baby or moving house then potty training is not a good idea! Check with other people who look after your child — it's important everyone does the same thing so they need to be ready too.
- Children are ready for potty training between about 18 months and 3 years old. They need to be physically ready — able to sit themselves on the potty and get up when they've finished — and mature enough to follow instructions and communicate with you.
- Get tuned into your child's wee and poo habits:
- Do they poo at about the same time(s) everyday? This will help you to know good times to sit on the potty.
- How often are they doing a wee? Babies do lots of little wees, but as the bladder develops it learns to store more so toddlers do fewer, bigger wees. If their nappy can stay dry for an hour or two they should be able to keep their new pants dry for a while.
- Today's disposable nappies soak up the wee really well. If it's hard to tell when they've done a wee, try putting some folded kitchen paper inside the nappy as this will stay wet. As well as informing you this might also help your child to associate weeing with being wet.
- If they are beginning to show some signs of awareness of when they have done a wee or poo they are recognising the signals their body is giving them, so get them ready for potty training...

Getting ready

- Get your child motivated! Plan a reward system like a sticker chart and get them involved so they can see their progress. During changing time, get them to do simple things like helping with their clothing themselves and remind them to wash their hands when they are finished.
- Talk about wee and poo... (or whatever you prefer to call it). Let them know that other people in the family do it too!
- Choose the terms you want to use and ask everyone who looks after your child to use them.
- To help them associate wee and poo with the toilet always change nappies in the bathroom and flush poo down the toilet. Tell your child if their nappy is wet or dry when you change them; talk about the wee and/or poo.
- Make toilet times fun, use catchphrases like '*poo goes in the loo*'. Let your child flush the toilet if they want to (close the lid for good hygiene).
- It is also a good idea if members of your family leave the bathroom door open and allow your child to know what they are doing. Children learn from copying us.

NIGHT TIME

- When your child is reliably dry during the day you can start thinking about night times. Preparation is important – watch out for dry nappies in the morning and get your child used to stopping drinks an hour before bed and sitting on the potty just before sleep. Protect the bed with a sheet; put a gentle light by the bed and practise getting to the potty or toilet. Make sure your child can pull their pyjamas up and down easily and have fresh pyjamas and bedding ready to deal with any wetting. Some children take much longer to learn night time dryness – check out ERIC’s Guide to Night Time Wetting if bedwetting persists.

GETTING GOING

- Goodbye nappies, hello pants! Don’t substitute pull-ups for nappies... they are just a different shaped version of the same thing. You can’t potty train in a nappy or pull up. Choose the right day and stop using them!
- Build up a routine. Don’t ask your child if they need a wee or poo – they haven’t learnt to recognise that yet. Simply say “it’s potty time” or “toilet time” every couple of hours.
- Keep a bag of toys ready to play with while they’re on the potty so they remain happy to sit for 2 or 3 minutes – use the bathroom whenever possible.
- Make it a special time for you both – the whole experience will be much more positive if you invest time to learn together.
- Choose clothes that are easy to wash and dry ... accidents WILL happen. Try to avoid buttons, belts and tights as they can take up valuable time. Jogging bottoms and leggings are much easier for children to manage, therefore increasing the chance of success.
- Let your child choose some pants that they really like. If a potty is not suitable then buy a children’s toilet seat together, make sure they have a step which is high enough. You might need to provide firm support under their arms until they get used to the feeling of being sat on the toilet.

What Should your Child drink?

- The most important way to ensure healthy bladder and bowels is to check your child has plenty of fluids – a minimum of 6-8 drinks every day. Water is the best choice.
- 2-3 drinks of milk a day is fine as part of a balanced diet. Well diluted fruit juice or squash can be included.

What Drinks Should they Avoid?

- Any drinks containing caffeine – like tea, coffee and cola.
- Sweetened drinks
- Don’t limit their drinks to help them stay dry... it doesn’t work! The bladder needs to be properly filled and emptied to behave properly.

The following websites have helpful tips and support:

- www.eric.org.uk/potty-training-faqs
- <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/Pages/potty-training-tips.aspx>
- www.eric.org.uk/Pages/Category/potty-training

Top 10 potty training tips

Top 10 potty training tips for successful toileting:

- **Drink plenty:** Make sure your child is having 6-8 drinks of water-based fluid a day to help keep their bowel and bladder healthy. Avoid fizzy drinks, drinks with caffeine in them and sugary drinks. Don't limit their drinks to help them stay dry as it doesn't work. The bladder needs to be filled and emptied properly to keep it working well.
- **Check for constipation:** Your child should poo at least four times a week and the poo should be soft and easy to pass. If they're passing hard poos or going less often than this, they may be constipated. Leaking, runny poo can also be a sign of constipation. [Look at](#) or [download ERIC's Guide to Children's Bowel Problems](#) for more information (see websites on previous page).
- **Use easy clothing:** Clothes that are easy to pull up and down are the best; avoid fiddly zips and buttons. Choose clothes that are easy to wash and dry. It can help to practise getting dressed and undressed. Let your child choose their own pants and practise wearing them to get used to the feeling.

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- **Pick a potty:** Let your child choose a potty if you're going to use one. Keep it in the bathroom and let them practise sitting on it. You might want to have more than one potty to begin with. If you're using a children's toilet seat, let your child choose it and a foot stool to help support them when they're on the loo.
- **Get into a routine:** Don't ask your child if they need a wee or a poo as they might not know what this is to begin with. Tell them it is 'potty time' or 'toilet time' and go every couple of hours.
- **Keep it short:** Don't let them sit for too long on the potty or toilet, two or three minutes is fine. Keep some toys handy to occupy them while they sit.
- **Encourage boys to sit down to wee:** They might also need a poo and sitting down will help them to go. They may empty their bladder better sitting down too.
- **Be consistent:** If your child is looked after by a relative or goes to nursery or a childminder make sure you let them know that you're starting potty training and the way you're planning to do it. It really helps if everyone who cares for your child is doing the same thing.
- **Give lots of praise:** For each little step like sitting on the potty, washing hands and getting dressed. Rewards are a good incentive – make them small and instant, like a sticker.
- **Be patient:** Potty training is a skill which may take some time to learn, so don't be surprised if there are lots of accidents to start with. You might decide your child isn't ready after all, in which case stop potty training and have another go in a few weeks.