

TIP SHEET

Steps Towards Toileting Independence



Children who know how to look after their self-care needs are proud of themselves. This sense of accomplishment is important in building a child's self-esteem. Although toilet training can be challenging at times, remember that learning is part of the struggle in achieving independence. A child may be ready to train between the developmental ages of 18 months to 3 years. This may vary for a child with special needs. When you are ready to try toilet training, focus on the progression of the skills rather than the age at which a child is "supposed" to be able to do something.

Remember that it is important to communicate with the family during this process. You will want to get the family involved in observing the signs of toileting readiness and toilet training. You may want to meet the family to discuss setting goals for their child to move towards toileting independence. A Home/Child Care Communication Book may be used to keep track of toilet training at home and at daycare.

Signs of Toileting Readiness:

- The child has a dry diaper for at least two hours at a time.

- The child has an interest in the toilet, sitting, and flushing.
- The child indicates that their diaper is soiled verbally, using signals, or by bringing you a new diaper.
- The child watches other children with interest and follows them in the toileting routine.
- The child sits on the toilet with their clothes on.
- The child is showing the same signals at home.

Pre-Toilet Training:

You have discussed all of these signals with the parents and agree that now is the time to start "Pre-Toilet Training". The child care setting and the home environment should be working together in this process to make it a successful experience for the child. Communicate with the family the strategies that have worked in child care and encourage the family to share what is being used at home.

Remember - consistency is the key to success.

- Use the "Elimination Record" chart found in the tools section to record when the child is soiled and dry. It will give you an idea of approximately when he may have to use the toilet.

Steps Towards Toileting Independence, continued

- Sit the child on the toilet about ten to fifteen minutes before the usual wet time, or about one hour after the last change.



- Use a toileting picture sequence to show the child the process of the routine.
 - At changing time, remove the child's diaper in the washroom while he is standing up, if possible, and sit the child on the toilet briefly before putting on the new diaper. Remember to praise every time.
 - If the child has a bowel movement in his diaper, empty the contents in the toilet and allow the child to flush it down the toilet.
 - Have the child follow the washroom routine with the other children that are trained.
 - Use a buddy system with the child so they will have a role model.
 - Use social stories with the child to promote understanding of the routine.
 - Use pretend play to develop the child's awareness (e.g., Fisher Price people on a miniature toilet or a doll on the potty).
 - Try to avoid negative reactions to bowel movements. For example, instead of saying "Ooh stinky!", you can say, "Oh, I smell poo!"
- Use the toilet visual sequence and social story every time the child follows the toileting routine.
 - When the child is sitting on the toilet, make sure he is comfortable.
 - The child's feet should be firmly on the ground, on a stepping stool, or block.
 - A toilet insert may help the child to sit more comfortably and may provide back support if needed.
 - Have handles along the wall to assist the child to hang on to when sitting and standing.
 - A book or a small toy may keep the child busy while sitting.
 - Have the child use the washroom with a peer to provide a positive role model.
 - Praise the child after every attempt, even if they do not urinate or have a bowel movement in the toilet.
 - Verbal praise, clapping, excited encouragement, songs, and rewards (sticker chart to show parents, a favourite story or toy) can be used to encourage and reward every effort the child makes.
 - Accidents are all a part of the process and should not be made a big deal.

If the child gets upset or has a lapse, it may be a good idea to stop the training for a week or two and then start again when the child is ready. The road to toileting independence can sometimes be difficult, but setting small, realistic goals and having a sense of humour can make it smoother for you and the child.

Toilet Training:

You have introduced the washroom routine to the child - he seems comfortable with the routine, continues to show an interest, and has actually used the toilet a couple of times. Now is the time to actually start the training. Here are some tips to guide you through this stage:

- Choose a time when the child is physically well and the daily routine is stable.
- Have the child wear clothes that are easily removed by an adult or by the child. Pants with elastic waist bands or draw strings work best.

For more information:

- Take a look at our section called [CREATING COMFORTABLE SPACES](#) for ideas on arranging the physical environment in the washroom area and the classroom.
- Use the [Elimination Record](#) to record when a child is soiled or dry.
- Make your own toileting sequence with picture symbols by visiting the [VISUALS ENGINE](#).
- Learn more about [Creating Social Stories](#).