

Toilet Training Children



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Critical Points

- Toilet Training is a Complex Process!
- **If your child begins to have constipation or withhold bowel movements, discontinue toilet training and consult your doctor.**
- It's better coming out than staying in! That's what I say!



Relevant Factors

- Onset of readiness are typically 2-3-years-old
 - However typical delays: Boys 4-5, Girls 3-4
- Diet is important
- Fear/anxiety and impulsivity issues
 - First settle and calm
- Trust building activities are key
 - Motivated by the relationship you share
 - Make it fun

Assisted Infant Toilet Training

- Not a recommended approach: often leads to increased accidents and withholding bm's
- Parent initiates toilet training in child's first year
- Aim to reduce or eliminate use of diapers
- During unclothed times when child starts to urinate parent makes sound (e.g., "sssss")
- Parent puts child on/over potty seat when elimination likely to occur and says sound.
- Reduces diaper rash & promote regular bm's
- However, later in childhood, more accidents occur

Sensory Issues for

- Desensitize to sitting on toilet
 - Use adapted potty / toilet seat cushion
 - Reduce noise & Use visual supports
 - Consider crowding - may need freedom to move a lot
 - Use relaxation – deep pressure, music, recorded program
- Adapt
 - You know your child best
 - Don't use force or put on spot
 - Model behavior, then child's turn



Readiness

- Hides, squats, grimaces, grunts **before** bowel movement
- Regular predictable bowel movements
- Stays dry 1-2 hours, voids a lot at once
- Wakes up dry
- Anticipatory signal before urinating
- Begins to void on toilet if caught at right time

Other Signs of Readiness

- Awareness of wet or soiled condition
- Watches others w/ interest, tries to imitate
- Sits on toilet/potty without complaint
- Anticipates elimination
- Dressing skills
- Responds to situational cues
- Wants to be independent

The Best Approach

- Dependent on the needs of your child
- Dependent on your lifestyle and resources



Options

- Assisted Infant Toilet Training
- Readiness Training
- Habit Training
- Visual Toilet Training
- Rapid Toilet Training
- Shaping
- Special consideration for Bowel Training
- A gentler approach

Readiness Training

- Desensitize to sitting on toilet 5-10 minutes
 - Adapt Toilet
 - Find calmers – music, TV recordings
 - Use books
 - Use mirrors
 - Start w/ 10 seconds, gradually increase to 10'
 - Set up routine: departure/arrival, after meals
 - Most importantly, be there to trust

Prompt Fading

•Start w/ verbal, **gesture**, and physical

First fade out physical, then fade out verbal, finally fade out gesture

By gradually fading prompts, child starts to pay attention to other relevant cues

	Prompt	Ex. Approach Toilet	Ex. Lower Pants
1	Verbal Gesture Touch	“Child, go to the toilet Use whole body point to toilet Guide toward toilet	“Child, pants down” Shadow pants down Guide child’s hands
2	Verbal Gesture Touch	“Child, go to the toilet Use whole body point to toilet No physical guidance	“Pants down” Shadow pants down Guide child’s hands to waistband
3	Verbal Gesture Touch	“Child, toilet” Use whole body point to toilet	“Pant down” Shadow pants down Guide child’s hands to waist
4	Verbal Gesture	“Toilet” Use whole body point to toilet	“Down” Shadow pants down
5	Gesture only	Point to toilet w/ arm & head	Point to waist band
6	Gesture only	Point to toilet w/ head	As part of approach toilet procedure
7	Gesture only	Point to toilet w/ eyes	As part of approach toilet procedure

Readiness Training Continued

- Set up situational cues – wait expectantly
 - E.g. Meals, Going somewhere – Fade prompts
- Set up unclothed trial – be alert, only once
- Use books & videos – see bibliography
- Sensitize to wet and messy
- Model toileting behavior – men sit
- Acknowledge & celebrate eliminations
- Catch child doing things well – celebrate
- Balance choices, requests, & directives

Attitude about Toilet Training

- Be calm, patient, but matter of fact
- Try to wait for interest
- Praise success, understand accidents
 - Accidents are a normal part of learning
- **Do not punish, shame, or scold**
 - It's better coming out than staying in!
- Give clear message of confidence
- Anticipate gradual, uneven success
 - Regressions may occur with major changes
- Be prepared, consider what if's, wait till ready!

Habit Training

- Start with 9 days of baseline
 - Chart voiding every $\frac{1}{2}$ hour
 - Keep track of fluids, foods, exercise, sleep
- Set up regular schedule 10 minutes before usual times for up to 10 minutes
 - Make toileting pleasant, interesting, relaxing
 - Reward success, but calmly
 - If no success, try again in another 10 minutes
 - Be calm about accidents
- Adjust toileting times to precede eliminations

Visual Toilet Training

(Boheme, 1999)

- Take baseline and set up schedule as in Habit Training Program
- Use toilet training ring (a sequence of pictures) to review steps for toileting 3 times per day (morning, afternoon, evening) and use the ring during toileting.
- Take 15-30 minutes after child eats and when exhibiting signs of needing to use toilet.
- Adjust schedule and eventually fade to regular schedule (adding 15 minutes between toileting times).
- Goal: awake, arrive, before & after lunch, departure, arrive home, after dinner, before bed.

Rapid Toilet Training Method

Originally developed by Azrin & Foxx

- Plan for about 2 weeks of initial training
 - Training occurs throughout child's waking day
 - Line up supports so adult can give undivided attention
- Key components
 - Initially prompt child to toilet every 15 minutes
 - Reward success on the toilet
 - Reward remaining dry off toilet
 - Use practice & clean-up for accidents
 - Start distraction free in washroom
 - After unprompted success, systematically fade in distractions & distance, and activities, fade out R+

Rapid Toilet Training Method

Originally developed by Azrin & Foxx

- Preparation –
 - Set up washroom w/
 - Adaptations to toilet/potty from Readiness Training
 - Change of clothes, 8 regular underpants too big
 - Minimize distractions, use relevant books, visuals
 - Favorite drinks, treats, meals in portions
 - Airtight containers for soiled clothes & trash
 - Clock & Doll-That-Wets Optional
 - Practice procedures before using with child
 - Switch to underpants only when set to engage

Rapid Toilet Training Method

Originally developed by Azrin & Foxx

- Stage 1: Voiding in Toilet
 - Prompt to toilet every 15 minutes, stay up to 10
- Stage 2: Staying Dry Off Toilet
 - Prompt every 30 minutes, reward dry every 5
 - Fade out prompts
- Stage 3: Initiation Training
 - Fade out reinforcers
 - Fade in distractions & distance from toilet
- Stage 4: Maintenance
 - Check only before reinforcing events, continue accident procedures, be sure generalized to other settings

Stage 1 & 2: Use Toilet, Stay Dry

Originally developed by Azrin & Foxx

- The first two stages are done within the washroom
 - However, for children or adults who feel too confined in small space, use potty/commode in an area with a floor and few distractions
- Make sure all distractions are at a minimum for child & adult.
 - Limited distractions to keep child's interest
 - Try to set up 2 hour intervals for adults

Stage 1: Voiding in Toilet

Originally developed by Azrin & Foxx

- Prompt to toilet at every quarter hour. Child
 - Touches or hands picture of toilet to adult (optional)
 - Walks to toilet, pulls away garments & sits
 - If child voids, give calm praise & quick desired treat at completion, flush & wash hands (if R+)
 - If does not void, no response, child readjusts garments & returns to area by toilet

Stage 1: Voiding in Toilet

Originally developed by Azrin & Foxx

- When off toilet – Check pants every 1-3 minutes – praise & give 1/8th of meal if clean & dry
- If child begins to void off toilet
 - Quiet startle – “Johnny, wet pants!”
 - Quickly direct to toilet, & say, “that’s where you go ...” Then practice this 5-10 times.
 - Guide child to clean up area & change clothes
- When use toilet 3-5 times, move to Stage 2

Stage 2: Remaining Clean & Dry

Originally developed by Azrin & Foxx

- Same procedures as Stage 1, Except:
- Prompt to the toilet every 30 minutes
- Dry pants check every 5 minutes when off toilet. R+ with 1/16 of meal
- Wet/Soiled pants practice as in Stage 1
- Remember to fade prompts!
- When child uses toilet w/o prompts, move to Stage 3

Stage 3: Initiation

Originally developed by Azrin & Foxx

- Do not prompt child to toilet unless fails the Rule of 3 (3 accidents in a row, no success).
- After 1st unprompted success, keep same.
- Then after each successful elimination
 - Increase distractors or distance
 - Increase time between pants check
 - Gradually fade out treats, then praise
- If fails Rule of 3, then go back to success, and then go only a half step.

Example of Stage 3

Init	Reinforce	Next activity	Inspect	½ step if Rof3
1	Treat & P	Keep as St.2	5 mins	Back to St.2
2	Treat & P	Hallway	10	1>Door way
3	Praise	Bedroom	15	2>Down hall
4	Treat & P	1 st floor Bth	20	3>Limit distr
5	Praise	LR w/ no TV	30	4>Limit distr
6	Praise	LR w/ TV	45	5>Boring TV
...				

Stage 3: Initiation

Originally developed by Azrin & Foxx

- For wet pants, combine practice across settings.
- If you must stop before the end of the day
 - Leave underwear on
 - Check pants when you can & encourage to use the potty
 - Use the usual procedures for accidents
- When initiates from all areas go to Stage 4

Stage 4: Maintenance

Originally developed by Azrin & Foxx

- No longer need to stay close
- Check pants before meals, departures, special events, and bedtime
- Usual procedure for accidents (except eliminate wet pants awareness)
- After one week of dry, discontinue pants checks, but still use positive comments
- Re-introduce using toilets elsewhere

Simplified Stage 1

- Direct child to the toilet before & after meals & at arrival & departure.
- After 5 total or 3 consecutive successes, child may decide to get up from toilet sooner,
- if child eliminates, praise & give highly desired treat,
- practice with child 10 times going to toilet with wet pants awareness,

Simplified Stage 1

- flushes toilet/washes hands (if he/she eliminated),
- Check child's pants every 15 minutes
- if child does not eliminate, give no reaction,
- 3rd day - check every 20 minutes, 4th - 30, 5th - 45, 6th -1 hour)
- if dry, praise and give small treat and as much as he wants to drink;

Simplified Stage 1

- When child begins to wet pants, immediately
- say firmly, "wet pants, no,"
- have child change clothes and clean up area of accident.

Simplified Stage 1

- When child initiates toileting successfully without direction
- eliminate prompts to toilet before & after meals,
- at arrival, bring child to toilet & let child decide,
- fade pants checks & treats

Shaping Procedure for Bowel Movements

- Don't rush this process!
- 1. Take an interest & give approval.
- 2. Give your child a diaper when signal displayed
- 3. We poop in here.
- 4. Over here, we sit here.

Shaping Procedure for Bowel Movements

- 4. Hey, who cut the tabs?
- 5. Now wait a second, this is too small.
- 6. Hey you, this is even smaller.
- 7. Maybe if I had a lot of toilet paper.
- 8. I don't need that much paper.
- 9. That size is just right.
- 10. How do I get my own.

Some Procedures for Bowel Movement Incontinence

See Schaefer, C. E. 1997, Toilet Training without Tears

- **The following procedure should be done in coordination with a doctor for children over 5 years of age for daytime encopresis.**
- First, have doctor examine child for organic problems such as neurogenic megacolon (which interferes with muscles moving feces), and anatomic megacolon (an obstruction in the bowels). These problems must be corrected surgically.

Some Exercises that can help when experiencing constipation

See [Exercises That Will Make You Instantly Poop](#)

- **Consult a pediatrician or pediatric physical therapist before starting. Use with patience & ensure comfort.**
- **Bicycle Legs:** Gently moving a child's legs in a bicycling motion while they lie on their back can help stimulate intestinal movement. This exercise not only aids in relieving constipation but also helps develop leg and trunk muscles. [Leckey](#)
- **Tummy Massage:** Massaging the child's abdomen in clockwise circles can promote bowel movements. This technique helps stimulate the digestive tract and can be a comforting routine for the child. [ERIC](#)
- **Deep Squats:** Encouraging children to perform deep squats can help in promoting bowel movements. This position can help relax the pelvic floor muscles, making it easier to pass stools. [Begin Health, Inc.](#)
- **Over Ball Stretch:** Having the child stretch over a stability ball can help in stretching the abdominal region, which may assist in relieving constipation. [Restorations Physical Therapy](#)
- **"Moo to Poop" Technique:** This method involves encouraging the child to take deep breaths and make a "moo" sound to promote relaxation of the pelvic floor muscles, aiding in bowel movements. [Pelvic Exercises](#)

Directive Training

See Schaefer, C. E. 1997, Toilet Training without Tears

- Look for signs preceding defecation
- Establish routine for sitting on potty 5 minutes at 2 hour intervals but every half hour around times he usually defecates
- Watch for signs of constipation – doctor may suggest stool softener, laxative, or enema
- During training weeks stay close, look for cues & take when cue is displayed.
- Reward success immediately and have child practice, help clean up, & change clothes if there is an accident

Habit Training

(usually takes between 15-20 weeks)

See Schaefer, C. E. 1997, Toilet Training without Tears

- Take child to washroom upon waking
 - If less than $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of feces, give glycerin suppository.
 - Then eat breakfast and use the toilet again
 - If does not eliminate, give enema. May need 2nd enema.
- During the day examine pants every hour and reward clean, dry pants.
- Once a week, forgo suppositories and enemas.
 - If child eliminates, go another day without suppositories and enemas.
 - If child does not eliminate, follow procedure above for another week.
- Once your child can go for 2 weeks without suppositories and enemas, discontinue program

A Gentler Approach

Toilet Teaching by Cole, J. (1993)

1. Introduce the idea-positive.
2. Give advance notice - a few days.
3. Give another reminder - a day or two.
4. Call off procedure - No!, out of sorts, or unexpected.
5. When the big day comes - 12hrs. w/ child.
6. At home remove the diaper - now put...in potty.
7. Lead him to the potty once - praise mildly.
8. Remind him once again - no diapers.
9. Now wait for accidents - good for learning.
10. Be relaxed about accidents - reassure child.
11. After an accident - use potty.
12. Don't flush - until child is away.
13. At naptime and at night - diapers.
14. From now on - diapers only if no progress, wait 1-2 months.

Summary

- Toilet Training is a Complex Process
- It's better coming out than staying in!
- Never use punishment or shaming.
- Prepare before beginning training.

Strategies

- Assess Readiness – Always start with Readiness Training
- If child becomes constipated or withholds bowel movements when stressed – Consult a doctor, work on diet, and, when ready, choose a less intensive approach to toilet training.

Strategies

- When readiness is established – try a Habit Training method first such as the Visual Toilet Training
- If unsuccessful, try the Rapid Toilet Training approach if child is not prone to constipation. Discontinue if constipation occurs or if no progress is made in a week.

Strategies

- If child already urinates but does not defecate on the toilet – try the Shaping Approach
- If child has problems with Bowel Movements
 - Consult your doctor
 - Special Considerations for Bowel Training by Shaefer (1989), Toilet Training without Tears

Options

- Readiness Training
- Habit Training
- Visual Toilet Training
- Rapid Toilet Training
- Shaping
- Special consideration for Bowel Training
- Other gentler approaches

Books for Children

- Brooks, J. No More Diapers. New York: Dell, 1971. Old but standard toilet training book. One section is for girls and one for boys.
- Casely, J. Annie's Potty. New York: Greenwillow Books, 1990. Book about girl overcoming resistance to toilet training.
- Cole, J. Your New Potty. New York: Morrow Junior Books, 1989. Excellent real picture book about girl and a boy learning to use the potty.
- Frankle, A. Once Upon a Potty. Hauppauge, NY: Barron's Educational Series, 1980. An otherwise good book about a child learning to use a big cup as a potty. *Excellent video based on this book is available in a version for girls and for boys.
- *Lansky, V. Koko Bear's New Potty. New York: Bantam Books, 1986. Excellent book about a bear learning to use the potty. Great illustrations.
- Mack, A. Toilet Learning. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1978. Yet to be reviewed.
- Reiner, A. The Potty Chronicles. New York: Magination Press, 1991. Frightening book about everything scary about the toilet.
- *Rogers, F. Going to the Potty. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1986. Great book by Mr. Rogers.
- Ross, T. I Want My Potty. New York: Kane/Miller, 1986. Silly book about a princess who is demanding.

Books for Families/Trainers

- *Azrin, N. & Foxx, R. Toilet Training in Less Than A Day. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974.
- Cole, J. Toilet Teaching. New York: Ballantine Books, 1983.
- Foxx, R. & Azrin, N. Toilet Training the Retarded. Champaign, IL: Research Press, 1973.
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