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Potty Training: What Parents Want to Know

Learning to use the potty is a big event in a child's life. Most children are eager to learn how to use the potty and are proud of their achievements. Potty training is easiest when children are physically and emotionally ready. This happens between two and three years of age. Girls usually gain control over their bowel and bladder muscles before boys. On the average, most girls are potty trained by 2 ½ years, and most boys by the age of three. However, don't be alarmed if your child is not potty trained by these ages. All children grow and develop at different rates.

The secret to successful potty training is patience and time. Learning is a full time job for most children. Learning to use the potty may not be as important to them as learning to climb, run, and talk. A child who resists potty training now may be ready in three to six months- often learning overnight.

How do you know if your child is ready?

- ✓ Can follow simple directions.
- ✓ Remains dry for at least two hours at a time, and dry after nap each day.
- ✓ Have regular and predictable bowel movements.
- ✓ Becomes uncomfortable with soiled or wet diapers; asks for diapers to be changed.
- ✓ Asks to use the potty.
- ✓ Asks to wear big boy/girl underwear.
- ✓ Can remove his/her pants and walk to and from the bathroom.
- ✓ Can indicate when he is about to urinate or have a bowel movement.

If most of these items describe your child, you may want to introduce potty training. If not, you will want to be patient and wait a little while longer. Rushing a child through potty training or beginning before the child is ready will result in frustration for you and your child.

Relax! A calm approach to potty training works best. Learning to use the potty takes time. Each child is different. Following these easy steps will make the process easier for you and your child.

Steps to follow:

- Show your child what he or she is to do in the bathroom.
- Teach your child the words your family will use for body parts, urination and bowel movements.
- Help your child recognize when he is urinating or having a bowel movement.
- Purchase a potty chair or an attachment for the toilet.
- Begin reading potty books to your child.
- Prepare your child with the purchase of training underwear and easy to pull up and down clothing. Avoid buttons, zippers, and belts.

- Sit with your child for a few minutes when they go potty.
- After a few minutes, help your child off the potty. Give hugs and praise for effort even when nothing is there.
- Keep a positive attitude when accidents happen. Avoid punishing, scolding, and shaming.
- Help children to learn to wipe themselves. Wipe girls from front to back to avoid infection.
- Wash hands with soap and warm running water. Teach them to wash their own hands.

More Tips:

- Plan to devote at least three to four days to begin potty training. Maintain the same routine for three to four weeks.
- Establish a routine by putting your child on the potty four to five minutes right after meals and before and after napping.
- Focus on only one major change at a time in your child's life. Avoid beginning training when planning to relocate, expecting a new baby, or transitioning from a crib to a bed.
- A protective covering between the sheets and mattress will be helpful until they gain full bladder control.

Conclusion:

- Potty training should be a positive experience for a child.
- It should take only a short period of time, if the child is ready.
- Potty training is as individual as learning to walk. There is no right age by which all children should be using the potty.
- Pay attention to the child's lack of readiness to avoid problems.

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