

Toilet Learning Steps

Below are steps to support your child in learning to use the toilet, as outlined in the Hello Underwear, Goodbye Diapers workshop.

Please keep in mind that development is a journey and every child develops at his individual rate. Accept that regression and moving back a step are an expected part of the process.

Skills in Place

- **Motor Skills:** Feels the urge to use the toilet, walks, backs up to a toilet, pulls garments up and down
- **Cognitive Skills:** Demonstrates body awareness, follows sequential directions, has memory recall
- **Social/Emotional Skills:** Shows a desire for independence, tends to be cooperative, can sit for a few minutes

Sign of Readiness for Parent(s)

- Ready to patiently support the process
- Able to keep the child's life calm without overnight guests or major transitions in the family
- Prepared to do lots of laundry
- Willing to applaud all efforts and attempts

Signs of Readiness For your Child

- Shows an interest in, or asks to sit on, the toilet
- Stays dry for 2+ hours at a time during the day
- Bowel movements become more predictable
- Is uncomfortable when his diaper is soiled or wet

Devise a Plan

- Choose words for body parts, urine, and bowel movements
- Confer with your child's teacher; discuss readiness and routines
- Plan routines for days and nights
- Discuss routines with all adults who care for your child

Set the Stage

- Purchase easy-to-manipulate clothing, such as pants with elastic waists
- Give children the opportunity to explore the concept without pressure
- Discuss the routines with your child
- Demonstrate hygiene practices
- Prepare to stay close to home for a few days

Daytime Routines

- Consistently have your child sit on the toilet before and after bedtime, naps, meals, baths, and leaving home or childcare, etc.
- Make hygiene practices part of the routine
- Recognize time of day for bowel movements, and have your child sit on the toilet during that time; often, reading books relaxes a child

Nighttime Routines

- Accept that night-time bladder and bowel control often takes much longer than daytime bladder control
- Avoid drinks for thirty minutes before going to bed
- Consider waking your child up to use the toilet before you go to bed
- Try using underwear at night when your child is dry in the morning for 2+ weeks