

CHILD CARE RESOURCE & REFERRAL

Advocating for well-being of children in child care.

Position Statement

10/2001

toilet learning

Learning to use the toilet is a big step in children's development. It can also be very frustrating for both parents and providers. Parents often look to child care providers for help and support in teaching their children to use the toilet. Toilet training will work best for children if parents and providers understand and use good practices.

key points:

Parents and providers often feel pressure to begin toilet training children at an early age...often times before the child is ready.

Children learn to use the toilet at their own pace. They need to be physically and emotionally ready to potty train.

Most children begin toilet training between 24-36 months, but every child is different. There is no right age to toilet train a child.

It is best not to push a child before s/he is ready. The more ready a child is when they start toilet learning, the more quickly it will go.

Some children are trained in a few days (usually older children), others are trained more gradually over a period of weeks.

Most children have accidents after they are trained. The worst thing to do is get upset.

Consistency is the key between parents and providers.

parents and providers working together:

Both parents and providers are often eager to get children potty trained and out of diapers. The high cost of diapers and the health and safety issues related to diapering often push parents and providers into early potty training. Parents and providers may not always be in agreement about the appropriate age for starting the toilet learning process. Children's progress may be much slower when toilet learning practices between home and child care are not consistent.

It is best if parents and providers can approach toilet training as a team. The child will do best when her/his caregivers agree on strategies and help each other accomplish goals. It is especially helpful if parents and providers agree on when a child is ready to begin potty training and what approach they will use.

don't force a child:

It is best to let a child learn to use a potty at their own pace. If children refuse to try to use the toilet, do not force them. If children are forced, they will often refuse to cooperate any further. Encourage children by providing pictures or books to look at while they are sitting. Let the child decide when to get up.

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developmental signs of readiness:

Knowing the signs of toileting readiness in children can help alleviate potty training frustrations. Not every skill needs to be in place before you begin, but look for a general trend toward readiness.

Some of the signs of readiness include:

Child is at least 2 year of age

Child is able to understand and follow simple instructions.

Child can walk to and from the bathroom by him/herself.

Child can pull his/her pants up and down or on and off.

Child understand words like “wet”, “dry”, “diaper”, “potty”, and has words for urine and bowel movements.

Child imitates older brothers and sisters, or adults; including bathroom habits and wearing underpants (wants to be like everyone around him/her).

Demonstrates independence by showing signs of wanting to do things by him/herself.

Has predictable, regular bowel movements. *This indicates strengthening of the bowel muscles.*

Can stay dry for long periods of time (2-3 hours). *This indicates that the child’s muscles are strengthening and beginning to control urine flow.*

Child can show you where the potty or toilet is when asked.

Expresses an interest in toilet learning or asks questions about toileting—may follow adults to the toilet.

Child tells you that they need to go to the bathroom, either with words or actions.

accidents happen:

Children will often have accidents as they are learning how to use the toilet. Adults should handle accidents calmly, stating, “*I see you had an accident. That’s okay. I know you will learn to use the toilet. You are trying hard. It will be better next time.*” It is important for providers to model this positive encouragement for parents. Keep in mind that boys tend to take slightly longer to toilet train than girls.

Physical punishment and criticism should never be used. Punishment and criticism often slow down the process because children become afraid to try.

what to do if there seems to be a problem:

Sometimes you may find that children have a very difficult time with the toilet training process. There could be a number of issues that may be causing a delay:

The child may have had diarrhea or constipation and associates going to the bathroom with pain.

There may be issues happening in the child’s home. Perhaps the child just moved to a new home, maybe a new sibling was just born, maybe mom and dad are going through a divorce. All of these situations could cause a delay in toilet learning or a lapse in toileting.

Sources:

National Network for Child Care - www.nncc.org