



## Toilet Learning

Most children are ready to begin toilet learning between the ages of 2 and 4 years, but each child is different. You'll learn to follow your child's cues through each step of the process. But be patient because it will usually take between 3 and 6 months before your child is out of diapers for good.

### How do I know when my child is ready?

Your child is probably ready for toilet learning when he:

- can walk to the potty (or adapted toilet seat);
- is steady and balanced when sitting on the potty;
- can stay dry in diapers for several hours in a row;
- can follow one or two simple instructions;
- can let you know when he needs to use the potty;
- wants to please you; and
- wants to be independent.

### How do I help my child learn to use the toilet?

- Make sure that you have enough time, attention and patience to help your child every day. Toilet learning doesn't happen overnight. It's a process, so watch your child for signs that he is ready to move from one step to the next. Don't worry about accidents – they are bound to happen!
- First, decide which words you are going to use to refer to body fluids, functions and body parts. It's best to be direct about toilet learning. You can also let your child watch you use the toilet.
- If other people care for your child, talk to them about your plans for toilet learning. It's important that all caregivers are consistent.
- Your child will be more secure and stable on a potty chair than on a regular toilet. If you don't use a potty, you'll need a toilet seat adapter and a footstool.
- Put the potty in a place that your child can get to easily.
- Help your child get used to the potty. Let your child sit on it while she is fully dressed. Then, have her sit on it after you've



taken off a wet diaper. You may even want to put the dirty diaper in the potty to show her what it's used for.

- When your child is ready, take her to the potty several times each day and encourage her to sit on it for a few minutes without wearing a diaper.
- Encourage your child to tell you when he needs to pee. Be sure to praise him, even if he tells you after the fact.
- Watch for signs that let you know he needs to pee.
- Develop a routine by having your child sit on the potty at specific times during the day, such as after getting up in the morning, after meals or snacks, before naps and before bedtime.
- Praise your child often and be patient. Expect accidents, and do not punish your child when they happen.
- When your child has used the potty successfully for at least a week, suggest that she try cotton underpants or training pants. When she is ready, make this a special moment.

### What if toilet learning doesn't work?

If the first try at toilet learning doesn't work, it's usually because your child isn't ready.

If your child refuses to use the potty, take a break from the training for about 1 to 3 months.

Your child may not want to pass a stool in a potty or the toilet, especially if she doesn't have good support for her feet. Let her have bowel movements in a diaper so she doesn't get constipated. This can make going to the bathroom painful. If it hurts, it's likely to take even longer to use the toilet.

### When should I talk to my doctor?

Talk to your doctor if:

- your child still refuses after several tries; or
- your child is older than 4 years of age.