



one step at a time



A parent's guide to toilet skills for children with special needs

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Overview

One Step at a Time is a guide to toilet training for parents whose child has special needs.

You may have 'put off' toilet training or believe that it is not possible to train your child because of their special needs. However, given the right kind of help, children with special needs can learn to manage going to the toilet, either completely on their own, or with some assistance. This is very important for their independence as they grow up.

By following the five steps in this booklet you can work with your child to develop the skills of toileting.

We encourage parents to start toilet training, or start thinking about it, when a child is around two years old.

Is this booklet for you and your child?

Whilst this booklet is written for children with special needs it can only give general information. You need to consider the specific needs and requirements of your child. As a parent you know your child best.

Children with specific disabilities such as spina bifida or cerebral palsy require a special bladder and bowel management program. If you have any queries about whether the information in this booklet is suitable for your child's needs talk to your paediatrician.

Using this booklet

One Step at a Time guides you through five major steps of toilet training:

- Step 1 Setting the scene
- Step 2 Developing the skills needed
- Step 3 Raising awareness
- Step 4 Using the toilet for wee and poo
- Step 5 Night time control.

Each step brings the child closer to the goal of being able to go to the toilet on their own. Once you read though each step you will see that toilet training is a complex task made up of a number of skills that your child has to do in a set order. Learning each skill may take some time for your child. So think of toilet training as a process where your child is learning to put together a number of skills that may take several months or longer. Don't try to rush through the steps. Take the time your child needs.

The Toileting skills checklist on page 9 will help you work out what stage your child is at now.

Included with this booklet are a number of tip sheets to help you with particular issues. The tip sheets can be found on the disc at the back; they are presented in this way to make the booklet less bulky. Have a browse to see what's there and what will be useful to you.

One Step at a Time refers to 'your child' and 'they' rather than 'he'/'she', and when referring to parents also includes carers. Note that the word 'wee' is used rather than urine and urination, and 'poo' rather than stool or faeces and defecation.

Toilet training a child with special needs can be hard work. It can be frustrating. Progress may be slow. But you should be proud of yourself and your child for taking positive steps in this direction.

Toilet training: a step towards independence

Being able to go to the toilet on one's own is an important life skill. It is more than simply going to the toilet without the help of another person; it is also about having personal control.

For parents, toilet training can seem to be a challenge, especially if your child has special needs. Having special needs does not mean your child cannot develop all or some of the skills of being toilet trained. It may just take longer.

By taking the process one step at a time many parents are surprised at what their child can achieve, particularly if they have been told that their child will never learn to use the toilet. Our advice is to be positive, patient and persistent!

How control of wee and poo develops

At birth our bodies pass wee and poo automatically. We don't make a conscious decision about doing this. Gradually, between the ages of two and three years, we gain control over wee and poo. This is the sequence of what usually happens:

- no poo in the night nappy
- control of poo when awake
- control of wee when awake – longer time between wees
- control of wee when asleep.

This sequence is only a guide as each child varies. Don't worry if your child's control develops in a different sequence.

The other skills needed for toileting independently

To go to the toilet on their own a child needs to have the following skills:

- mobility – be able to get to and from the toilet
- sitting – be able to sit down on the toilet and maintain the position
- communicating – either using language, sign or pictures to indicate the need to go to the toilet
- dressing – be able to remove clothing then replace clothing.

The table opposite, *Skills development for independent toileting*, breaks down each of these skills into smaller steps. The steps are colour coded to match the colour of the five steps in this booklet so that you can easily see where a particular skill is covered.

A word on being ready

Perhaps you've been told to wait until your child shows signs that they are ready for toilet training. You may have been told to look out for:

- Interest – your child expresses curiosity in watching others go to the toilet.
- Dryness – their nappy stays dry for up to two hours, showing they are able to store wee in the bladder.
- Nappy issues – they may refuse to wear nappies, or may try to take the nappy off after a poo.
- Awareness – your child can tell you they're doing a poo or a wee as they do it, or can tell you straight after.
- Attention – they have the ability to sit in one position for two to five minutes.

Skill development for independent toileting

MORE INDEPENDENT	COMMUNICATION: indicates with word, sign or picture	MOBILITY: getting to and from the toilet	SITTING: sitting on the toilet	DRESSING	BLADDER AND BOWEL CONTROL: knowing when to go and does wee or poo in the toilet
	Asks and can wait if needs to then goes to the toilet independently	Takes self to toilet and sits independently	Sits down on the toilet independently and stays until completed toileting	Removes and replaces clothing independently	Uses the toilet for wee and poo and is otherwise dry and clean
	Asks to go to the toilet using word, sign or picture	Needs verbal prompts, i.e. directions, but is physically independent	Sits unassisted, but may need attention or praise to stay sitting	Actively attempts to remove clothing	Uses toilet regularly with only occasional 'accidents'
	Indicates the need to go to toilet	Needs aids or physical assistance to walk	Placed on the toilet but sits unassisted. May need rail and step	Actively assists when clothing is removed	Regular toilet routine is established and uses the toilet more than having 'accidents'
LESS INDEPENDENT	Taken to the toilet as part of a routine. May show picture	Needs help to be wheeled and transferred	Fully assisted by an adult and requires specialised equipment	Co-operates when clothing is removed	Uses the toilet when placed on it but all other times uses nappy
	In nappies, no toileting	Changed on change table	Is not sitting on the toilet	Carer removes clothes before nappy change or being placed on toilet	No awareness, is in nappies all the time

Key

- See Step 1
- See Step 2
- See Step 3
- See Step 4
- See Step 5

Many children will not tell you or indicate when they are ready for toilet training. Nappies are just too good at keeping them feeling dry and comfortable. So it is up to you to decide when the time is right for toilet training. For the child with special needs, the following checklist will tell you if they are ready:

- stays dry for around 1½ to 2 hours
- is not constipated
- can sit on the toilet/potty
- can follow simple instructions.

The *Toileting skills checklist* opposite will help you make this decision.

Are you ready?

Family and friends often give you a lot of advice about toilet training. They are well meaning but may not understand your child's special needs. Don't feel pressured into something you or your child are not ready to do. Toilet training takes time and effort. Ask yourself, 'Is this a good time for me to be doing this?' Take into account:

- What's happening in your life – have any major changes just occurred or are anticipated in the near future, such as a new baby, moving house?
- Are you able to organise support from family and friends so you can lean on them if you need to?
- The difference having your child nappy-free will make. Think about the time and money you will be saving and how much easier it will be to go out with your child.

There may be no perfect time to start but getting organised and having support will help you and your child with this important process.

Where to begin

If you are starting out for the first time, Step 1 on page 10 is the place to begin. You may find it useful to identify some of the toileting skills your child may have developed already. Use the *Toileting skills checklist* on the next page and the tip sheet *Goal setting to help your child learn* to help you make a plan to get started. The checklist and the tip sheet will also help you if you are starting again after a break from toilet training.

Help with toilet training

You are not alone when you are in the process of toilet training your child. Page 22 lists people, organisations and resources to help you. In addition, talk to everyone involved with your child – child care, school, family, friends – so you all have the same approach.

a step towards independence

Toileting skills check list

In using this checklist, insert a ✓ if your child can do this skill.

Keep this record to help you chart your child's progress with toilet training.

My child's toileting skills	Date	Skill present	Prompts or help given
Goes to the toilet without any prompting and has no accidents with wee or poo			
Tells me or signs the need to go to the toilet			
Tells me or indicates after a wee or poo in the nappy			
Holds on to wee for at least 1½ hours during the day			
Co-operates when taken to the toilet			
Follows instructions to go to the toilet			
Can get to the toilet – with or without an aid			
Can pull down pants			
Can get on to the toilet			
Can sit on the toilet up to 2 minutes unsupervised			
Can sit on the toilet up to 2 minutes with supervision			
Can wee in the toilet			
Can poo in the toilet			
Can get off the toilet			
Can wipe bottom			
Can shake penis			
Can pull up pants			
Can flush toilet			
Can wash hands			
Can dry hands			

Step 1: Setting the scene

Begin this step by the time your child is 2 years old. This first step is mainly about making changes that start you on the path to toilet training.

We suggest that you begin this step by the time your child is 2 years old because this is when most children develop awareness of a full bladder and bowel. It can be very difficult to persuade a five-year-old that the nappy is not the toilet!

Establishing healthy habits

Developing the following habits is good for your child's health and well-being. These healthy habits also assist in the process of toilet training.

Eating well – encourage your child to eat a wide variety of foods especially fruit and vegetables and wholemeal breads and cereal products. These foods provide a range of essential vitamins and minerals, and help prevent constipation. It is important to avoid constipation as it can make toilet training more difficult. The tip sheet *Constipation* covers this issue in some detail.

Drinking well – encourage your child to drink six water-based drinks spread evenly throughout the day. Drinking regularly means wee is steadily produced and the bladder fills and empties regularly. It is important that your child has the feeling of a full bladder several times during the day. Fluid is also important for a healthy bowel as it helps to keep the poo soft and easy to pass.

Exercise each day – regular exercise improves mobility and posture and helps keep the bowels working so poo is passed every day or so. Remember poo should be soft, formed, and easily passed.

Sitting on the toilet or potty at regular intervals during the day – after meals is a good time to start sitting the child on the toilet or potty as the food may stimulate the bowels to work. Encourage your child to use the correct sitting posture. The tip sheet *The Toilet position* explains how to do this.

The tip sheet *Food, fluids and fun! Eating and drinking well for successful toilet training* gives more suggestions for establishing healthy habits.

Getting into a different routine with nappy changing

Try to change your child in or near the toilet/bathroom so they begin to connect wee and poo with the toilet. Where possible, change your child in the standing position as this helps make them aware of a different routine. Change the nappy quickly without play.

If possible, place your child on the toilet or potty when the nappy is off so they get the feel. Do not expect them to use the toilet or potty at this stage; you are just introducing them to a different type of seat. The section *Getting the equipment you'll need* (see opposite) discusses how to make sure your child is safe and feels safe when sitting on the toilet.

Talking about and showing what happens in the toilet

Have an 'open door approach' so your child can watch you use the toilet. Show and explain to your child that this is where poo goes. If possible, tip the poo from the nappy into the toilet.

Using the words wee and poo

Decide on the words you and your family will use for wee and poo. It is important that everyone – child care, school, family and friends – uses the same words so your child does not get confused with different words meaning the same thing. These are the words your child will themselves use later on when asking to go to the toilet.

Use the chosen words at nappy-changing times so your child can learn the difference between wee and poo. At nappy change talk positively about how they have done wee or poo in their nappy: 'Clever boy, you've done a big wee', 'Good girl, you've done a poo'.

Learning about wet and dry

Talk about the difference between wet and dry at nappy change, and about washing hands, having a shower or bath. 'Your hands are wet (then dried), now they are dry.'

Getting the equipment you'll need

All children need some form of equipment to help them be and feel safe on the toilet. Insert rings to reduce the size of the toilet seat and toilet-seat frames are readily available in childcare and variety shops. A footstool is needed as your child's feet should be on a firm surface, not dangling in the air. The tip sheet *The toilet position* gives the correct sitting position on the toilet. The tip sheet *The toilet area* describes ways you can make the toilet an inviting and safe place.

If your child has poor sitting balance they will probably require specialised equipment. Discuss equipment with your occupational therapist or physiotherapist.

Skills introduced and developed in this step

- Establishing healthy habits.
- Getting familiar with the toilet.
- Beginning to sit on the toilet/potty.
- Understanding wet and dry.
- Deciding and using the words for wee and poo.

Tip sheets

- Constipation.
- Food, fluids & fun! Eating and drinking well for successful toilet training.
- The toilet position.
- The toilet area.

on the path to toilet training...

Step 2 : Developing skills needed

A child needs to have a number of skills before they can use the toilet on their own – it's not just about being able to do wee or poo in the right place.

That is the main event but to go independently your child needs to be able to:

- recognise the need to go to the toilet
- tell you – verbal, sign or picture*
- hang on
- find the toilet*
- get to the toilet*
- pull down clothes and underpants*
- sit on the toilet*
- use the toilet for wee or poo or both
- wipe – this is usually the last skill children learn as it is difficult
- shake – boys need to be taught to shake their penis after doing wee
- get off the toilet*
- dress and undress*
- flush the toilet*
- wash and dry hands*.

The highlighted skills (*) are the 'support' skills needed to be independent with toileting. Encourage your child to practice these skills, gradually putting them together before the focus moves to actually doing wee and poo in the toilet.

This section focuses on:

- sitting on the toilet
- dressing and undressing – pulling underpants up and down
- knowing how to use the toilet.

Some decisions to make before you start: potty v toilet

We recommend that you start where you intend to finish – your child using the toilet. By starting with the toilet and not the potty you have made it easier for your child as they don't have to learn to use the potty and then learn to use the toilet. Make sure you have the right equipment for your child to be safe and feel safe on the toilet. See page 22 for information on where to get assistance with this.

Listed in the table below are the advantages and disadvantages of both to help you make your decision.

Potty v toilet

Potty	Toilet
Is small, easy to use, non-threatening and comes in bright designs.	You are simplifying the learning process for your child.
Promotes independence, as a child may be able to use it without help.	There is no transition to another piece of equipment.
If you forget it when you go out, your child may have to use a toilet anyway, which maybe confusing.	A toilet can simply be flushed, but a potty must be cleaned after each use.
	Toilets are everywhere but a potty has to be taken on outings.

How to use rewards and praise

Rewards and praise are important tools you will be using to teach your child the skills of toileting. Here is some information about rewards and how to use them.

Rewards are commonly used to engage children in developing new skills. They have two purposes, to give feedback and to help with motivation.

Feedback is very important in learning new skills. By giving a reward you are telling your child that they have performed the skill correctly. A reward can also help motivate your child to co-operate and repeat the skill. In giving a reward you are responding to your child's achievements, thus increasing the chances of the skill being repeated.

The following points need to be kept in mind in relation to rewards:

1. Reward need to be appropriate. It is not necessary to offer big or expensive rewards. Choose something your child likes that is quick, easy to give and low cost or no cost.

Social rewards such as a smile, hug, clapping, or singing a song may be all that is required. Other reward ideas are playing a game, reading a story together, choosing a special drink or DVD. Stickers and star charts are another option if your child is able to understand this reward system.

2. Give rewards immediately, do not wait. Have the reward ready. Give the reward every time your child does the skill you are working on. (If rewards are not given straight away they lose their power to encourage the behaviour you are rewarding or your child may be confused about what they did to earn the reward.)
3. Combine rewards with praise so your child knows what behaviour or skill is being rewarded. Praise should be specific and given enthusiastically: 'That's great, you've done a wee in the toilet!'
4. Keep the reward specifically for the toileting skill so your child doesn't get confused about why they are getting the reward. It is a good idea to have one reward for wee and one for poo. Usually the poo reward is bigger and more exciting to the child as it is given less often than the wee reward.
5. Ensure everyone who is involved in the toilet training process knows what rewards are being given.

6. Gradually fade out the rewards as your child masters the skill you are teaching. Keep up the verbal praise all the way through. Do not stop rewards suddenly but start decreasing how often you give them, perhaps every second or third time. After a while you can reduce to every fourth or fifth time. Continue in this way until you are rewarding now and then. Your child will stop asking for the reward as they become more independent.

When your child has learnt to use the toilet, rewards will no longer be needed. Occasional praise will be enough to keep your child motivated and using the toilet.

Sitting on the toilet

If you haven't done so yet, get the equipment you will need to ensure your child is able to sit on the toilet feeling safe – insert ring, footstool, over-toilet seat or potty chair.

Depending on your child's communications skills you may also need to learn the sign for toilet or get a picture of the toilet. Tip Sheet *Toileting picture steps* has some pictures.

Most children need to practice sitting on the toilet because it is a new routine and a different kind of seat. It has a hole in the middle so they may feel that they are going to fall through even where the hole is too small for their bottom!

The aim is to get your child used to sitting on the toilet and being happy to sit there for up to two minutes. There is no expectation of your child using the toilet at this stage. If they do, 'make a fuss' with the praise you give, so they know you are pleased and to encourage this new behaviour. If nothing happens, praise them for co-operating with sitting on the toilet for example 'Good sitting'.

The tip sheet *The toilet area* gives ideas on ways to make the toilet area an inviting, safe and relaxing place.

Toilet toy to help with sitting

A toilet toy is a good idea to encourage your child to sit and stay on the toilet. Some ideas for the toy are: bubbles, small soft ball, squeeze toy, book or anything that holds your child's interest.

Here's how to use a toilet toy:

- The toy is to encourage your child to stay sitting on the toilet. Your child can only play with it when sitting on the toilet. Store the toy close to the toilet out of reach.
- You may need to sit on the toilet and play with the toy to show the child what to do.
- When your child gets off the toilet put the toy away.
- If your child wants more time to play with the toy they can keep playing if they are sitting. Remember that the rule is: 'no sitting, no toy'.
- Once your child understands that the toy can only be played with when sitting on the toilet you may wish to use the toy to show your child it is toilet time and to follow you to the toilet. At the same time say 'toilet now' or sign toilet.

However, you may not need to use a toilet toy. Your child may be happy with just having your attention – singing a song, talking, reading a story.

Sitting

Gradually increase the number of times and the length of time your child sits on the toilet. Two minutes is the sitting-time goal; five minutes at the absolute maximum!

- Sitting on the toilet needs to become just another part of your child's day. A good time to start sitting your child on the toilet is before their daily shower or bath.
- Once they are sitting without complaint try adding another time – first nappy change of the day is a good one.
- Then increase the sitting to after every nappy change or every meal. You may catch a poo in the toilet but that is not the aim at this stage. If it does occur make sure you make a great fuss when giving praise!
- Check that the toilet toy remains motivating. You may need to change it for something else. Some children have a few toys or books that are rotated every couple of days.

- Gradually increase the time your child is expected to sit. In the beginning it may be a few seconds but over time increase to two minutes.
- It is a good idea to write down how long your child sits for each time. This will help you see the progress your child is making.

Some children will not sit with a bare bottom. Start them sitting with their clothes on; they may also need the lid shut. Gradually move to lid open, pants down, and bare bottom.

Note: Never force your child to sit on the toilet. Do not allow them to be distressed. If they are upset or refuse to sit, stop, walk away and try again later.

Dressing and undressing for toileting

Learning to dress and undress involves several skills. Children with special needs should be encouraged to help undress/dress from an early age.

Here are some tips to help your child learn to pull their pants down and up.

- Use loose, comfortable clothes. Your child might do best with shorts, pyjama pants or track pants with an elastic waist.
- Help your child find the best position for dressing. This might be sitting on the floor or on a small stool. It might be lying on the floor on their back or on their side. Your child might like to stand, lean on the wall or hold onto a rail.
- Give the child lots of time.
- Start with pushing pants down.
- Place your hands over theirs to help them if they need. Fade out your help.
- Use simple words. Always use the same word such as 'Pants down'.
- Do the steps in the same way each time.
- Once your child is able to push down their pants get them to practise pulling up their pants using the same steps.
- Praise when your child tries hard or does well.

Getting help

If your child has limited movement, poor hand skills, poor awareness of body position, poor balance, reduced vision or short attention span speak to your child's occupational therapist. They can assist with special clothing, equipment and more strategies. An occupational therapist can also help you if your child is taking a long time to learn the dressing skills.

Knowing how to use the toilet

In Step 1 we suggested that you start to talk about using the toilet and to have an open door approach when you go to the toilet. Now is a good time to talk more specifically about the toilet. Here are some ideas to help you:

- Encourage your child's brothers/sisters to show how they use the toilet.
- When your child is watching you use the toilet, talk about what you are doing. Show your child your wee or poo in the toilet. Showing your poo can seem embarrassing but it is a powerful learning tool.
- Play 'toilet time' with a soft toy or doll. Talk about the toilet routine.
- Read picture books about going to the toilet. On page 23 is a list of some of the books available.
- Use the series of toileting pictures to talk about going to the toilet. The tip sheet *Toileting picture steps* has a set of pictures and information on how they can be used.
- Make a photo book with pictures of your child using the toilet. The tip sheet *Photo book for a story about toileting* gives directions of how to make and use such a book.

Skills introduced and developed in this step

- Sitting on the toilet.
- Pulling pants down and up.
- Sequence of steps when going to and using the toilet.

Tip sheets:

- Toileting picture steps.
- Photo book for a story about toileting.
- Toilet area.

a child needs to have a number of skills...

Step 3 : Raising awareness

Raising awareness about wee and poo.

Nappies are fantastic at keeping children feeling dry. They can absorb large amounts of fluid so your child is not getting the sensation of feeling wet and uncomfortable. In this step you have to make the nappy feel wet so your child becomes aware of when they have done wee. You also need to raise your awareness of your child's bladder and bowel function by keeping a record.

Raising awareness of wet and dry

- Talk about wet and dry when you are changing a wet nappy and putting on a dry nappy and when washing hands and drying hands.
- Put your child into underwear inside the nappy. Your child will be able to feel when they have done wee. Alternatively place folded kitchen paper towel in the nappy to act as a liner (use one that does not fall apart when wet!). Your child will then be able to feel when they have passed wee.
- Encourage your child to tell you when they are wet.

Keeping a record of wee and poo

Keeping a record of wee and poo will help you work out your child's pattern. This pattern will be a guide to help you decide when to take your child to the toilet. The record needs to be kept for about a week for the pattern to emerge. There is a copy of a Wee & poo: daily recording sheet at the back of this booklet and also on the tip sheet disc. Here's a guide to completing the chart.

- Have your child in underwear or place the 'liner' in the nappy. Each hour check to see if the liner is wet or dry. Record this on the chart. Also write down when poo has been passed.

- Have child care/school or other programs your child attends keep the chart too.
- Keep the chart for about a week.
- Look for a pattern. There may not be a clear pattern but you should be able to identify the length of time between wees. This gives you a guide to how often you will need to prompt/take your child to the toilet. A clearer pattern should emerge in relation to bowel movement.

To move to Step 4 your child needs to be passing good amounts of wee rather than just dribbles and needs to go at least 1½ hours between wees. Your child's poo should be soft formed and easily passed. There should be no constipation.

If you have concerns about your child's bladder or bowel function seek advice. Page 22 gives details.

Skill introduced and developed in this step

- Increased awareness of the sensation of passing wee.

Tip sheet

- Wee & poo: daily recording sheet.

awareness

Step 4 : Using the toilet for wee and poo

We are now at the nitty-gritty of toilet training – the expectation of wee and poo happening in the toilet.

The supporting skills have been practiced so your child should be well on the way to:

- co-operating when asked to go to the toilet
- happily sitting on the toilet
- making attempts to pull down and pull up their clothes and underwear.

By now you will have a good idea of how often your child is doing wee and poo so you can begin the training process.

Before you start

Before you move your child into underpants to start the training process you need to have decided on the following:

- A plan for dealing with wee and poo accidents – see below for some suggestions.
- The verbal prompt to be used and, if you require it, the sign or picture prompt. Remember everyone involved should use the same prompt such as 'Toilet now' plus the sign or picture that they will use.

- Whether you are going to use a photo story toilet book or picture sequence, in which case you need to get them ready. The tip sheet *Photo book for a story about toileting* tells you how to make a book for your child. The tip sheet *Toileting picture steps* describes how to use these pictures to prompt your child.
- Rewards – what and how you will use them. See page 13 for more information.
- How you will teach your son to wee on the toilet: sitting v standing. See table below.

You may need to purchase extra underwear as your child may go through several pairs a day when you first start. Talk to everyone involved about when your child moves into underpants – child care, school, family and friends.

Suggestions on how to deal with accidents

Accidents are part of the learning process – we learn by our mistakes. Be careful that you give your child the right response so they can learn. Only reward the behaviour you want, such as indicating the need to go to the toilet, staying dry, using the toilet.

Make up an 'accident pack' containing wipes, underwear and rubbish bag and keep it in or close to the toilet. Collect the pack before taking your child to the toilet so you can complete the clean up with a minimum of fuss and conversation.

Sitting vs standing for boys

Sitting	Standing
Helps keep the training process simple when starting.	No transition from sitting to standing but some boys refuse to sit on the toilet for poo.
Your son is sitting for both wee and poo.	Can be difficult for smaller boys to reach the toilet.
It is easier to get the wee into the toilet and less messy.	Many boys learn to wee standing up without ever being taught.

When your child has an accident, it is important that you stay calm and say merely, 'You've done wee, let's get changed' or 'you've done poo, let's get changed'. Go to the bathroom and help your child clean up. Keep the conversation to the minimum and do not make the clean-up a fun time for your child.

Just for boys: sitting or standing to wee

We recommend that you start with sitting to wee to avoid confusion with poo. Only teach your son to stand once he is reliable with going to the toilet for wee and poo.

Getting started with using the toilet for wee and poo

- Pick a time when you can be around your home for two or three days to focus on the toilet training.
- If this is not possible, be sure to let child care or school know that you have started toilet training and that your child will not be in nappies.
- Remove the nappy. Use nappies only at night.
- Use underwear or cloth trainer pants.
- Use the information you collected on the *Wee & poo: daily recording sheet* to guide how often you will take your child to the toilet.
- In these first few days give your child big drinks to increase the likelihood of them doing wee in the toilet. Wait 10–15 minutes after a big drink then try your child on the toilet. See the tip sheet *Sitting for wee but nothing happens*.
- When you take your child to the toilet remind them of the steps with pictures or words. Assist where necessary.
- When wee or poo is passed into the toilet make a big fuss with praise and rewards to show how pleased you are and to reinforce the skill. Remember to also praise co-operation.

Keeping on track

- After these few days of 'intensive' training you will have established a routine of taking your child to the toilet following drinks and food. This means your child will be sitting on the toilet after breakfast, morning snack, lunch, afternoon snack, dinner or tea, and before bed, in all five or six times each day.

- Keep to the routine both at home and when on outings. Try not put a nappy on your child. If you are going out and are not certain about the toileting facilities put the nappy over the underpants.
- Keep the toilet time focused. Remember it should be fun but not entertaining. You want your child to focus on using the toilet not on how long you are willing to read stories, sing songs or play.
- Keep a record of success in toileting and of 'accidents'. It will help you track the progress your child is making.
- If you are timing toileting, begin to extend the times between sitting your child on the toilet. The aim is for your child to be able to hold between toilet times for around 3–4 hours.
- As your child becomes more reliable with using the toilet fade out the prompting and encourage them to ask or tell you when they need to go to the toilet. This may take several months especially with poo.

Progressing to independence

Teaching your child to use unfamiliar toilets is an essential part of toilet training. Public toilets can be particularly difficult because of the extra noise, lighting and different smell. Here are some suggestions to help your child cope:

- Introduce different toilets as soon as is practical for child during family outings.
- Firstly just show the toilet. Point out the things that are the same as at home – toilet, toilet paper, flush button, hand basin.
- When first introducing unfamiliar toilets, try to locate toilet facilities that are not excessively noisy or busy. Parent rooms or disabled toilet facilities are often quieter.
- Take some familiar items out with you so the toilet is not completely strange. If you use a toilet toy or have a toilet book these items will help your child to feel more 'at home'. You may wish to make a toilet book with different toilets in it.
- Remember to take the toilet insert ring.

Bottom wiping

Wiping the bottom is an important skill for your child to learn. Being able to bottom wipe is essential for good hygiene, health and independence with toileting. Bottom wiping can be a difficult skill to learn. It requires balance, hand skills and sensory awareness. Your child also needs thinking skills, such as remembering to do it, planning, doing the steps in the right order then checking they have completely cleaned their bottom.

Tips to help your child learn to wipe their bottom

- Practice reaching around to the bottom during dressing. To help in developing the right action, loosely tuck a scarf or the belt of a dressing gown as an animal tail into the back of their pants so that they can pull it off. Practice washing different parts of the body, including the bottom, in the bath.
- Moist toilet wipes are an alternative when your child is first learning this skill. Wipes may be more acceptable as your child is familiar with the wiping sensation the wipes provide in nappy changing. Wipes are also easier to handle.
- When your child is sitting on the toilet make sure they are in the best position to be able to reach around to wipe. This may mean sitting on the toilet with a footstool. Your child may prefer to stand, lean on the wall or hold onto a rail when they wipe. Remember that your child needs to be safe and feel safe.
- Make sure your child can reach the paper.
- Choose toilet paper whose texture or smell appeals to your child.
- Place your hand over theirs to learn the task. Fade out your help as they progress.
- Mark the toilet wall with a sticker about 50cms below the toilet paper holder so your child can measure how much to tear off.

- Use the same set of instructions for wiping every time:

- pull down paper to sticker
- tear off paper
- roll/fold into hand
- reach back to bottom
- wipe once from front to back
- check if paper is clean
- drop paper into toilet

Repeat sequence of steps until paper is clean.

- A set of picture or cue cards giving the order of the steps may help prompt your child get the steps in the right order.

Allow lots of time for your child to practice these steps. Because wiping is a difficult skill to learn you need to get your child to practise as often as possible. Practise is the way we learn especially difficult skills.

Praise them for doing well or trying hard.

If you need extra help, speak to your child's occupational therapist.

Skills introduced and developed in this step

- Using the toilet for wee and poo.
- Bottom wiping after using the toilet.
- Putting together the toileting steps.
- Learning to use unfamiliar toilets.

Tip sheets

- Photo book for a story about toileting.
- Wee & poo: daily recording sheet
- Sitting for wee but nothing happens.
- Wee in the toilet but no poo.
- Not moving forward may be moving backwards.
- Using a pants alarm for toilet training.
- Toileting picture steps

using the toilet...

Step 5 : Night time control

Once they have learned how to go to the toilet during the day some children will quickly become dry overnight. But others take time to learn the skill of staying dry when asleep.

About night time bladder control

To stay dry overnight we need to develop the skill of responding to our bladder when asleep. We either need to wake up to go to the toilet or hold on, a complex interaction between our body and our brain. When we are asleep the body continues to make wee so the bladder is filling and sending messages to the brain about how full it is. The brain must respond by either keeping the bladder holding on or wake us up to go to the toilet. If the brain does not respond to the bladder's messages the bladder empties when it is full. Most of us develop night control without having to do anything special.

Tips for night time control

Wait until your child has reliable day time control before moving on to night time control. It takes at least six months for children to be reliable during the day. A child with special needs is likely to take longer.

Your child may tell you they are ready either by not wanting to wear a nappy or taking it off. Many children will wake up dry but use the nappy because they are wearing it.

- Get a waterproof mattress protector or an absorbent bed pad. See page 22 for further information about these products.
- Let your child know that the nappy will not be put on at night and they are to try to keep their bed dry. If they wake up with a wet bed they are to let you know.

- A social story can be used to help your child understand what they are trying to achieve. See the tip sheet *Photo book for a story on toileting*.
- Don't restrict fluids in the evening but make sure your child is not over-drinking before going to bed. Their last drink should be about an hour before going to bed. If you are in the habit of giving a night bottle you will need to wean your child off it.
- Take your child to the toilet just before they go to bed.
- Remind them they are trying to keep their bed dry until morning or wake up to go to the toilet.
- Leave a night light on.
- Don't wake your child to take them to the toilet during the night as they often have no memory of this in the morning. Waking them doesn't help them learn to wake up to the feeling of needing to do wee.
- Keep a record of what happens each night – dry or wet.
- Use rewards for specific things you want your child to do for example: going to the toilet before bed, helping to strip the bed, putting wet clothes into the laundry. See the section on rewards and praise on page 13 for further ideas and tips.

How long should you keep going?

Try these tips for a couple of weeks. If there are more dry beds than wet, keep going; if there are more wet beds than dry it may be too early for your child. If the bed is wet every night, your child is not ready or may need treatment strategies for true bed wetting.

About bedwetting

Bedwetting, sometimes called nocturnal enuresis, is when a child over five years old is unable to stay dry over night. Treatment is usually offered to children over the age of six. The tip sheet *Bedwetting* gives more information about this issue.

Children with special needs may take longer to gain night time control.

Skills introduced and developed in this step

- Staying dry when asleep.

Tip sheets

- Photo book for a story about toileting.
- Bedwetting.

control during the night...

Success in toilet training

Success with toilet training will be determined by your child's abilities – so it will vary from child to child. Below are some pictures of success; you may be able to identify one or more of them for your child:

- When taken to the toilet does wee or poo in the toilet, there are few accidents.
- Needs some help with the toileting process but can do most of it by themselves. Help may include assistance with clothes, getting on to the toilet.
- Uses visual prompts to move through the steps of toileting, either a book or picture strip on the wall next to the toilet.
- Needs supervision only, can complete the steps independently.
- Can go to the toilet without being prompted to do so.

One Step at a Time is a step-by-step guide aimed at giving you information and confidence in toilet training your child. It can be a long journey and it may take time but each step is progress. We congratulate you on all the efforts you and your child have put into achieving a level of independence with toileting.

Sources of assistance and information

You may need additional help and support with toilet training.

The following pages give suggestions for contacting people and organisations which may be able to assist; provide information on continence products and government schemes; and list some books, DVDs and web sites that could be useful for you and your child.

Health professionals

Consider consulting the health professionals or other people who currently work with or look after your child. These may include:

- child health nurse
- Early Childhood Intervention services
- continence nurse advisor
- paediatrician
- general practitioner
- occupational therapist
- physiotherapist.

For more general information and advice

National Continence Helpline: 1800 33 00 66

Victorian Continence Resource Centre:

Tel 03 9816 8266

Email info@continencevictoria.org.au

Web www.continencevictoria.org.au

Continence Advisory Centre of WA:

Tel 08 936 9777

or 1800 814 925 WA callers only

Email info@continencewa.org.au

Web www.continencewa.org.au

NSW Continence Promotion Centre:

Tel 02 8741 5699

Email cfansw@optusnet.com.au

South Australia Continence Resource Centre:

Tel 1300 855 886 SA & NT callers only

or 08 8266 5260

Email info@continencesa.org.au

Web www.continencesa.org.au

Parentline: 1300 30 1300

MyTime

MyTime groups provide support for mothers, fathers, grandparents and anyone caring for a child with a disability or chronic medical condition.

For your local MyTime group go to: www.mytime.net.au

Continence products

Here is an overview of continence products available. Talk with a health professional should your child need to use these products.

Pads – can be disposable or washable (reusable).

They come in a large range of sizes and styles.

Your child may need this type of product if they have outgrown the nappies available in the supermarket or nappies aren't absorbent enough. There will be one that suits their needs.

Pants – can be disposable or washable. The washable ones come in a variety of styles for both boys and girls. The pants can be unpadded, partially padded or fully padded. The unpadded pants have a pouch where a pad can be placed inside. They are sometimes used during toilet training to raise awareness of being wet or soiled.

Bedpads and chairpads – can be disposable or washable. The washable ones can be used alone when you are training your child at night or can be used as a back-up to pants and pads. The chair pads can be used in wheelchairs or car seats; they are particularly useful when your child is on the school bus. The disposable ones are used in the short term such as when you are on holiday or if your child is having a sleepover.

Bedding protection – a range available of waterproof covers for pillows, bedding (doonas or quilts) and mattresses. They come in a variety of sizes and styles.

Government funding schemes

The Commonwealth and the state governments in Australia have schemes and programs that help people with permanent or severe incontinence to meet some of the costs of their continence products.

For more information about continence products and funding schemes contact call the Continence Helpline or Continence Resource Centres listed under general information and advice.

Toilet training story books

There are a large number of books written for children about toilet training. Below is listed a selection only. Many of these books will be available in your local library.

- *Zoo Poo: A First Toilet Training Book* (2004) Richard Morgan: Barons Educational Series.
- *Liam Does Poo in the Toilet: A Story about trouble with toilet Training* (2008) Jane Whelen: Banks Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- *Big Girls Use the Potty* (2008) Andrea Pinnington: DK Publishing.
- *The Potty Books for Boys* (2007) Alyssa Satin: Capucilli Barron's Educational Series Inc US.
- *Nappy Duck and Potty Piggy* (2007) Bernadette Ford: Boxer Books Limited.
- *It's Potty Time for Boys: Potty Training Made Easy!* (2008) Chris Sharp: Smart Kid's Publishing.
- *Run Think Go!* (2007) Scott Winters: Author House Publishing.
- *Even Fire Fighters Go To The Potty* (2008) Wendy Wax & Naomi Wax: Little Simon Publishing.
- *On Your Potty Little Rabbit* (2008) Kathleen Amant: Clavis Publishing.
- *Anna on the Big Toilet* (2008) Kathleen Amant: Walker books
- *I Have to Go* (1988) Robert Munsch: Annick Press

DVDs

Several DVDs are available on toilet training, however only one is for children with special needs – Tommy's Toilet Triumph. This is in cartoon format and is available to purchase from: www.shop.service.sa.gov.au

The following DVDs may be available in your local library but can be purchased from sellers online or shops:

- *Go Potty Go: Potty training for tiny toddlers*
- *Potty Power for Boys and Girls*
- *Sesame Street: Elmo's Potty Time*
- *The Potty Movie for Girl*
- *The Potty Movie for Boys*
- *Bear in the Big Blue House – Potty Time with Bear*

Web sites

There is a great deal of information on toilet training online. The selected sites below provide clear information about toilet training children with special needs.

- PromoCon is a UK-based organisation. Their web site has a number of useful downloadable resources for families and health care professionals: www.promocon.co.uk
- Autism Consultation and Training ACT-NOW: www.med.monash.edu.au/spppm/research/devpsych/actnow
- Novita Children Services: www.novita.org.au
- Raising Children Australia: www.raisingchildren.net.au
- National Autistic Society UK Tip Sheet on Toilet Training: www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=2427&a=3366

information and assistance

Wee & poo: daily recording sheet

[illegible]

Please check your child's pants every hour.

Please place a ✓ in the appropriate column every time you check your child's pants or whenever they have an accident.

For example, if the pants are wet place a tick in the Pants checked and Urine in pants columns.

[illegible]

THE BRISTOL STOOL FORM SCALE (for children)

Choose your

Poo!

type 1		looks like: rabbit droppings Separate hard lumps, like nuts (hard to pass)
type 2		looks like: bunch of grapes Sausage-shaped but lumpy
type 3		looks like: corn on the cob Like a sausage, but with cracks on the surface
type 4		looks like: sausage Like a sausage or snake, smooth and soft
type 5		looks like: chicken nuggets Soft blobs with clear-cut edges (passed easily)
type 6		looks like: porridge Soft blobs with clear-cut edges (passed easily)
type 7		looks like: gravy Watery, no solid pieces ENTIRELY LIQUID

The concept by Professor DCA Candy and Emma Davey, based on the Bristol Stool Form Scale produced by Dr KW Heaton, Reader in Medicine at the University of Bristol. © 2005 Norgine Limited manufacturer of MOVICOL®-Half

Tip sheets

You will find the following tip sheets on the CD at the back of this booklet:

- Bedwetting
- Constipation
- Food, fluids and fun!
- Goal setting to help your child learn
- Not moving forward may be moving backwards
- Using a pants alarm for toilet training
- Photo book for a story about toileting
- Sitting for wee but nothing happens
- The toilet area
- Toilet position
- Toileting picture steps
- Won't sit for poo



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One step at a time

A parent guide to toilet skills for children with special needs

Tip sheets

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