

Toilet Training

When is my child ready to start toilet training?

Most children are ready for toilet training by 18 to 30 months. Typical signs that children are ready include:

- Being able to walk without help
- Being able to take off their clothes
- Being able to communicate that they need to use the toilet
- Being able to follow simple commands
- Showing an interest in toilet training (such as asking to wear “big kid” underwear or imitating parents)

Which toilet training method should I use?

There is no “best” training method, so use the approach that works best for your child and your family. Think about how your child learns best. There are two main approaches: child-oriented training (also called the Brazelton method) and structured behavioral training (also called the Azrin and Foxx method). The child-oriented approach allows training to go at the child’s own pace. The structured behavioral approach uses treats and praise when the

child successfully uses the potty chair, and gentle discouragements when there are accidents. There are some smartphone apps to help parents and children with toilet training, but these haven’t been studied enough for doctors to know how they compare with other training methods.

What else should I know?

Setbacks are normal during toilet training. Try to take a patient, encouraging approach. Toilet training typically takes longer for boys. Don’t try to train your child before he or she is ready. Starting too soon can end up taking longer. Try not to start training when there are other stressors in your child’s life (such as a recent or upcoming move, or the arrival of a new sibling).

Let your doctor know if your child refuses to use the toilet, hides when needing to have a bowel movement, is constipated, or wets the bed. It’s okay to take a break from toilet training if there are setbacks, and many of these problems will go away over time.

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