

Potty Training

Using the potty is a developmental milestone that can create real anxiety in parents. You may worry about "pushing" your child while at the same time worrying about not helping your child through this important step.

Readiness

- Most children are ready to withhold a bowel movement and urine by the time they are 18 months old
- However, if a child has been ill or there has been a big life change (such as a divorce or illness) the time may not be right even if the child is physically ready.
- For most families, the readiness is more about the parent's readiness and willingness-not the child's!

First Steps

- Buy a small potty and place it in your bathroom. Let your child sit on it at will, with clothes on or when getting ready for a bath. Talk about the potty as neutrally as possible: "Soon you will put your BM's and pee in the potty".
- Empty soiled diapers into the toilet or the potty paired with a positive, "You will soon be able to do this all by yourself".

On Your Way

- Take your child with you to the store to buy a dozen or more of thick, training pants. Let your child pick out some "real" underwear-with any characters he or she likes.
- Remove the changing table or change its purpose by placing the training pants on it and putting the diapers in another place, such as a closet.
- Try and choose a less stressful time in your life to begin this process; a long holiday weekend sometimes works well.

The First Day

- When your child wakes up, remove his diaper and say, "It's time to put on your new big boy pants. Many children will gladly do this but some toddlers will dig their heels in and say "No".
- If your child is reluctant, keep a neutral stance and stay with him in his room until he is willing to put them on (with your help, if necessary).
- Tell your child that he is the "boss of his body" and that when he feels his pee or poop coming he can go to any potty in the house; by himself; or with one of you.

- Have realistic expectations: EXPECT SOME PUDDLES AND POOPY PANTS.
- Your child has a good sense of what to do; what he doesn't have is the knowledge that using the potty will make him feel better about himself as he learns to take control of his body.

The Mess and the Mastery

- The key to success lies in understanding that it is your child's responsibility to use the toilet and consequently, when he doesn't, he must face the consequences of not completing his task. In this case, that means cleaning up his messy or wet pants.
- The clean up is an essential part of the process. If you lay your child down and clean him, it will be no different than wearing a diaper-just messier.
- What does a clean up look like? Take your child to the bathroom whenever you notice that there has been an accident. Tell him that he has a job to do. That means that he must pull down his pants, empty any contents, clean up the floor and himself and finally, put on clean underwear.
- Your child may resist cleaning up-or he may love it! Either extreme (or anything in between) is OK! This is not a punishment but rather a natural consequence of his actions so it is still "working" even if he cleans up with relish.

Some Do's and Don'ts

- Do praise your child by telling him "You must feel so proud-you listened to your body and knew just what to do".
- Don't nag by dragging your child or asking them incessantly if he has to go to the potty.
- Do suggest using the potty when you see "pre pee-pee" signs or before you go out-the hard part, is backing off it the answer is "NO".
- Don't insist that they sit on the potty-even if you know he has to go. Don't entertain your child on the potty-it is his job to go to the toilet.
- Don't reward with food or other bribes.
- Do use internal motivation, which increases a sense of mastery and competence. • Do keep your voice and body language as neutral as possible. Your child's resistance is not an attempt to get you mad but rather a reflection of his inner tug-of war, between his desire to be clean and dry and his equally strong desire to keep you responsible for his body.

Final Thoughts

- Try and think about this process as your child's responsibility. If you take it on yourself, placing your child on the potty, bribing or cajoling him you will elongate the process by making it more important to you than to him.

