What about night-time dryness?

If your child is between three and four years of age and has been dry during the day for a few months, you could find out whether he or she would like to come out of nappies at night. If your child is interested in trying this (and many children provide a clue by commenting upon wet beds or nappies) put them in pants or pyjamas. Also, if afraid of the dark, leave a light on - so that they can reach the potty or toilet easily. Here are a few further tips:

☆ Encourage your child to use the toilet or potty just before getting into bed.
☆ Protect the mattress, pillow and duvet (ERIC sells a range of washable, waterproof bedding protection). There are also disposable and washable absorbent bed mats or pads available that are a useful ‘stepping stone’.
☆ Praise your child for small steps - such as going to the toilet without the need for prompting, drinking good levels of fluid during the day; telling you when they’ve wet - and of course for any dry nights.
☆ Try not to show your personal frustration during periods of bed wetting.

The speed at which children achieve night-time dryness varies, often starting with one or two dry nights a week and building up slowly over a number of months. However, if your child is wet every night for 2-3 weeks (or any period that causes laundry problems or other difficulties), try not to show your disappointment. He or she is perhaps not ready to become dry.

You may wish at this stage to use absorbent night-time padded pants rather than reverting to nappies - and to try again in 3-4 months time.

If you have any further concerns about the process of your child’s potty training, consult your health visitor, paediatric nurse or family doctor. Alternatively, ERIC The Enuresis Resource and Information Centre has a Helpline on Tel: 0117 9603060 (Weekdays 10.00am-4.30pm).

Further useful reading


Other useful resources


Enuresis Resource & Information Centre (ERIC) 34 Old School House, Britannia Road, Kingswood, Bristol BS15 6BB. Telephone: 0117 9603060 Facsimile: 0117 9603040 Email: info@eric.org.uk Website: www.eric.org.uk

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Potty and Toilet Training...

Parents often feel under pressure from family, friends - or the local nursery - to have their child toilet trained by the age of three. Yet we know that children vary a lot in the age at which they are ‘naturally ready’ for toilet training. This leaflet is designed to answer some commonly asked questions - and to reassure parents that they have not failed if the process takes longer than anticipated. The message is that children will gain bowel and bladder control on their own pace - with parents playing an important guiding role.

When should I start potty training?

Choosing the right moment to start potty training is not always easy. Between the ages of two and three children often want to come out of nappies - this is a good time to start, providing:

- Your child can understand simple instructions, such as "find your potty".
- Your child is able to sit on, and get up from the potty with only a little help from you.
- The gap between wetting is about one hour.
- Your child is emotionally ready (if your toddler is going through an aggressive or resistant phase, it’s probably best to wait until this has passed).
- You have ‘clear run’ with no major upheavals for your child or family, such as starting nursery, moving house or going on holiday.

There is no evidence that toilet training earlier than eighteen months will bring forward the age when a child is able to recognise that he or she needs the potty or the toilet and to ‘hang on’ until they get there. True ‘training’ is getting to these stages - parents who say that their child was trained at an early age often mean that their child stayed dry only with the parent doing a lot of the hard work of remembering and catching them in time!

Does intensive potty training work best?

There are no hard and fast rules on how to potty train. Some parents take it slowly, others prefer to train more intensively. The important thing is to be relaxed about the process - and to try and link 'potty time' with your child's natural body rhythm (it might be useful to keep a record to help you with this). This can also provide a peaceful moment to play or to read a story.

The speed at which children gain control varies - and it is not uncommon for progress to suddenly halt. Instead of struggling on it may be best to leave it for a month or so before trying again.

Some children gain night-time bowel control first, before day-time bowel and bladder control and night-time dryness - but this varies very much from child to child. There is no 'right' pattern.

Are there any special tips?

The general message is for parents to praise their children and encourage small steps towards independent toileting; helping to undress and dress again; sitting on the toilet for up to five minutes after meals (even if no results!); wiping child’s bottoms (front to back) and washing hands thoroughly. Or talking about the benefits of growing up - what he or she can now do - you could even try using favourite pants, like Minnie Mouse pants that your child doesn’t wish to spoil - a clever way to encourage the next step forward. But try not to show your frustration if the process isn’t smooth or there are relapses (even though it is not natural to feel this way) - as criticism and punishment will have the opposite effect. The following pointers may also help:

- Choose a strong potty with a rigid base to stop it tipping over, so it feels safe and secure.
- Keep the potty (or potties) in the same place so that your child always knows where to run to.
- Dress your child in clothes that can be taken off and put on quickly - also, if convenient - and the weather is warm enough - let your child run about with no nappies or pants on.
- If your child has the protection of a nappy but to be more aware of when they are dry, you could put a pair of cotton pants underneath the nappy.
- Plastic sandals can reduce the problems of wet or soiled shoes!
- Adopt an ‘open door’ policy in the bathroom, so that your child can see other members of the family using the toilet.
- Encourage your child to drink at least 5-6 glasses of fluid a day (water-based drinks or milk).

When do I introduce the toilet?

Some children will prefer to use the toilet from the beginning - in which case a toilet step or box under the feet and a small ‘trainer’ toilet seat can provide a sense of security. For other children, by the age of three to three and a half, you could begin by positioning the potty next to the toilet - and introducing it as the next stage for ‘growing up’.

When can I say that my child is potty trained?

Once your child uses the potty or toilet in time to avoid accidents, even if he or she needs reminding and needs help with clothing and bottom-wiping, you can say that your child is potty trained.