

Building Blocks to Toilet Training

Based on ERIC charity www.eric.org.uk and the *Institute of Health Visiting*.

Toilet training is your baby or child learning to use the potty or toilet instead of a nappy. Research shows it is better for your child's bladder and bowel health to stop using nappies between 18 and 30 months. The longer children wear nappies, the harder it can be to try a new place for them to wee/poo.

By starting from 6-9 months, means most children can master potty training from around 18 months. If your baby/child has special educational needs, and disabilities, you should **not** wait to start toilet training.

Toilet training is all about learning skills, and these can be taught with extra help and a clear routine. Every child is different, try not to compare!

1. Constipation

Make sure your child is not constipated. If you think they are, it is important to get help with this **before** stopping nappies! Constipation can lead to wetting as a full bowel presses against the bladder. Your child should pass **soft (number 4) stools at least four times a week**. If they pass fewer poos than this, or harder poos, they may be constipated, leaking runny poos can also mean constipation. **If you suspect your child is constipated, see your G.P.** It may be helpful to take a poo diary/photo of the poo.

If your child is on medication such as Movicol, ensure it is correctly mixed as per the instructions (powder sachet added to exactly 62.5 mls water) before adding to food or drink, do not stop until your GP tells you to stop. It can take 3 months of soft poo for bowels to return to normal.

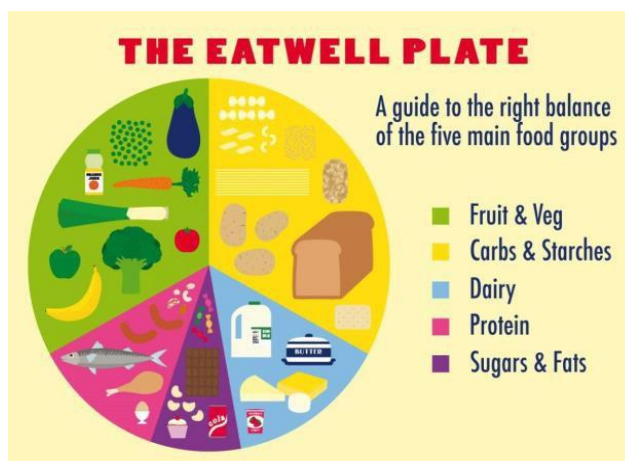
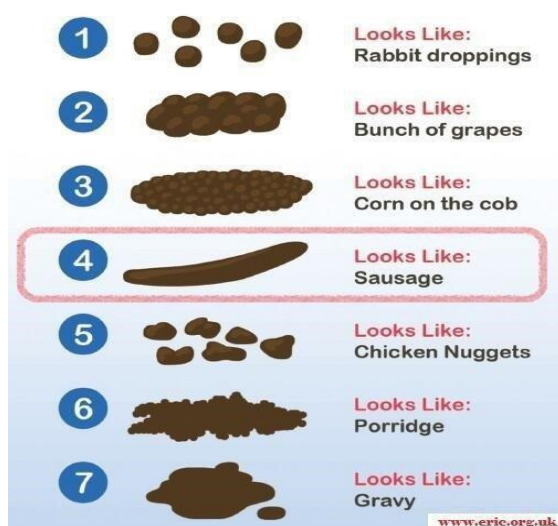
Check your child is drinking plenty of fluids- a minimum of 6-8 drinks of 150-200mls every day (water is best). When introducing solids offer water only in a cup.

As part of your daily routine (possibly snack/lunch/dinner times), strongly encourage them to finish their drink, (minimum 3 times per day) within a reasonable time scale (approx. 20 mins) before moving on to the next activity. This drink should be 150-200ml in one session (also offer drinks in between these times). The bladder needs to fill and empty at least 3 times each day, to work well.

Eat a varied diet including fruit and vegetables, carbohydrates (carbs) and starches, dairy, protein, sugars and fats.

Regular exercise. Exercise such as jumping and bouncing games, running and physical play- to help to get the poo moving.

What does healthy poo look like?



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2. Clothes and Pants

Choose clothes that are **easy to pull up and down, wear Pull-ups with pants over the top or just pants.**

Practice getting dressed and undressed, at other times, rather than just at “Toilet Time”.

When toilet training your child, they must always wear pants, rather than going without any underwear.

3. The Toilet

Before you stop using nappies, help your child get used to sitting on the toilet or potty. This will help them feel confident and know what to do.

Choose a suitable potty/child's toilet seat, that fits securely, along with a step that is high enough to provide firm support under the child's feet while they sit on the toilet. Help your child get on and off the toilet and step if needed. You can help to support your baby sitting on the potty if needed, start with a few seconds building to 2 or 3 minutes.

If your baby or child has special educational needs and disabilities, supportive aids can help such as potty chairs with side support. Arm rests, grab rails and back rests. If under the Speech & Language Therapist (SALT) or Occupational Therapist (OT), discuss your child's individual needs for toilet training.

Most Important! When there is a need to change a pull-up/pants, do it in the bathroom or toilet environment, to help them link it with wees and poos. If they are badly soiled use a mat on the bathroom floor. Keep pads/clothes etc. in the toilet area.

Let your baby or child have nappy free time for up to 30 minutes after they have done a wee/poo (with pants on). This will help them get used to not wearing it. Let your baby/child see you use the toilet so that they learn it's nothing to be afraid of.

At this stage boys need to learn to wee sitting down, not standing, as they must feel happy to sit when it comes time to poo on the toilet. Sitting helps empty the bladder and prevents constipation.

4. Toys

Keep a bag of toys ready to play with while they're on the toilet. This will ensure they remain happy to sit on the toilet for 2 or 3 minutes. Blowing bubbles and windmills, and singing Row Row the Boat with the actions, whilst sitting on the toilet, can help them to wee/poo. **Never phones or iPad!** Help your baby learn through play, use toys/books/games about potty or toilet training.

5. “Toilet Time”

Always use the same words “Toilet Time” when asking them to come to the toilet area to change their pad. “Toilet Time” is a good phrase to use, as then once they are wearing pants you can continue to use the same command. If your child is under SALT they may suggest symbols or social stories.

Encourage all people who spend time with the child to use the same words.

Do not ask your child if they would like to come to the toilet, they need to understand that it is you telling them. It's not a choice at this stage, **simply say “its toilet time”.**

6. Reassurance

Reassure the child about the activity they will be coming back to once Toilet Time is finished using few words. e.g. “Now it's Toilet Time, next we can play with cars/TV/go in the car”, etc. This will offer natural rewards for following your command and following the routine (Now and Next). Positively reinforce this during the toilet visit. For example, “Well done coming for “Toilet time”, next will be playing with your cars” (not all children are ready/understand/react well to this approach).

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7. Routine

Make “Toilet Time” part of your routine. To begin with, start by sitting your baby or child on the potty/toilet once or twice a day. Try to change nappies as soon as they are wet/soiled, this teaches them that it is healthy to be clean and dry. Any time you know your baby/child needs a wee/poo, sit them on the potty or toilet.

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Then, make changing/checking pad in the toilet part of your daily routine, and where possible sticking to roughly the same times each day, (instead of only visiting the bathroom, just when the pad needs changing) increasing frequency. For example, when they get up, after a feed/mealtime (breakfast, lunch and dinner), before bed as well as each nappy change.

8. Changing Standing up

When your child can stand, change their nappy standing up. Whilst changing them, talk to them about wee and poo and how our body feels.

Always put the poo in the toilet from the pull-up or potty.

Teach them to bend over, whilst standing, to be wiped.

Let your baby/child see you use the toilet, so that they learn it is nothing to be afraid of.

Praise and encourage and support them during each completed part of the toilet routine, e.g. “what a big girl, well done!” This is great to boost their self-esteem and make them feel good about growing up.

9. Consistent Approach

Be consistent and always follow the same routine when visiting the toilet and ensure all those that care for your child do the same.

The routine could be:

- say “Toilet Time” and go to the toilet area
- help them to get on the toilet step and turn around. (If not using a potty)
- whilst standing, pull down clothes, pants and pull-ups (leaving the clothes by their ankles)
- help them to sit on toilet/potty. Whilst they are sat on the toilet, they could blow bubbles or sing
- if needed, take off wet/soiled nappy/pants and whilst sitting, put on a clean one, pants and clothes
- help them to get off the potty/toilet and step.
- teach them to wipe themselves (bend over for you to wipe if needed, empty any poo from nappy/pants into the toilet)
- pull up clothes
- flush the toilet and wash hands

10. Giving Praise

Give lots of praise, remain calm and patient. Use kind words, don’t say poo is “smelly” or “stinky”. Give praise for each little step, like sitting on the toilet, washing hands or for them trying to use the potty or toilet, rather than for staying clean and dry, which your child might not manage.

Celebrate small wins so they feel proud and keep trying.

Rewards can be a good incentive – make them small and instant, like a sticker.

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What's next?

Once all **Building blocks have been worked on**, ask yourself these questions:

- does your child do wees on the potty or toilet, at least 3/4 times **every** week, in all environments?
- do they do a poo on the potty or toilet, at least once **every** week in all environments?

If the answer is yes to both questions, then it may be time for **stopping nappies!**

Choose a few quiet days at home to start, to help the child get used to the change.

Avoid times with big routine changes.

Taking off nappies in summer may help, but **don't** delay toilet training because it's not summer!

When you are ready, tell your child it's time to stop using nappies. Help them say goodbye and explain they'll now use the potty or toilet for wees and poos.

Watch for signs like fidgeting or hiding. Gently guide them to the potty or toilet.

Avoid asking too often, wait for signs, and gently say "Its toilet time".

Sticking with it!

Be consistent, maybe stay at home for a few days. If your child is at nursery start on a weekend.

Always take a potty or toilet seat out with you (not foldable ones).

Have spare clothes, wipes, nappy sacks with you at all times.

Stay calm, never punish or shame, as this can make it harder for you and your child to learn together.

Use protective covers for hard to clean areas.

Do not put a nappy back on for any reason, it will confuse them. You may still use a nappy at night with pyjamas at this stage.

Night-time!

Some children stay dry during the night-time soon after becoming dry during daytime. Others may still wet after age of 5 years and may need an assessment. It's not your child's fault if they are wet during sleep. If your child isn't dry at night by age 5, speak to your School Nurse or healthcare professional.

When to ask for help

Ask for help if:

- you feel unsure about how to start or what to do next
- your baby or child has special educational needs and disabilities
- your baby or child is afraid of the potty or toilet or if you are worried about toilet training
- constipation or pain is making toilet training hard (see your GP)

If more support is needed, or you would like an appointment at our continence clinic, you can contact the **Duty Health Visitor on 497640**

Please leave a message or email, with your child's name/date of birth, and we will get back to you.

For more toilet training information from ERIC, scan this QR code.



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If you feel you need to record your child's wee/poo or drinks, here is a chart you could use.

Name of child:	Date of Birth:	Date chart started
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Complete the chart for a full four days to help plan a toileting programme and identify if there are any issues, such as constipation or success on the toilet/potty.

If your child is at nursery/school, include what happens in all environments.

If the child is wearing a nappy or pull-up, at the first pad change of the day put a kitchen roll liner inside the pad (no need to do this if wearing pants). Every hour the pad/pants are checked and a record made on the chart whether the pad/pants are wet (W) or dry (D) or if the child has had their bowels opened/poo (P). You can use a +, ++, +++, to indicate how much wee/poo. If the kitchen roll pad is wet then it should be changed, but the nappy/pull up can stay on until it would normally be changed/soiled.

Time	Toilet	Pad/Pants	Drink
7.00			
8.00			
9.00			
10.00			
11.00			
12.00			
13.00			
14.00			
15.00			
16.00			
17.00			
18.00			
19.00			
20.00			
Total			

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7.00			
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19.00			
20.00			
Total			

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Comments:

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Building Blocks to Toilet Training Plan

These are current Building blocks goals to be worked on and points achieved.

		Goal X	Achieved ✓
1	Make sure your child is not constipated, passing 3 or 4 soft stools (type 4) per week. Are they drinking an adequate number of fluids- 6-8 drinks per day? (each drink 150-200mls) As part of their daily routine, 3 x daily, (e.g. snack/lunch/dinner times) encourage them to finish their drink, (150-200mls per drink,) within a reasonable time (20 mins) Are they eating a varied diet and have regular exercise? Is a wee/poo/drink diary or chart needed?		
2	Wear suitable clothes. Pull ups with pants over the top, or just pants (never no underwear)		
3	Have a suitable potty (kept in toilet area) or child's toilet seat, that fits securely, a step that is high enough to provide firm support under the child's feet. (If your baby/ child has special educational needs and disabilities, discuss your child's OT) Let your baby or child have nappy free time for 30 mins. after they have done a wee/poo (with pants on). This will help them get used not wearing it. Do all changing of nappies/pull ups in the bathroom or toilet (boys always sit to wee).		

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		Goal X	Achieved ✓
4	Have a box of 2/3 fun toys, bubbles or books in the bathroom, or singing, when sitting on the toilet, aiming to sit for 2/3 minutes. Never phone or iPad!		
5	Always use the same phrase "Toilet Time", when telling them it's time to check/change their pull-up (use SALT recommended communication if applicable)		
6	Reassure the child about the activity they will be coming back to. (Now and Next, only if this approach is suitable for your child or recommended by SALT)		
7	Start by sitting your baby or child on the potty/toilet once or twice a day. Change nappies as soon as they are wet/soiled. Any time you know your baby/child needs a wee/poo, sit them on the potty or toilet. Then make changing/checking their pad in the toilet area, part of your daily routine. For example, when they get up, after a feed/mealtime (breakfast, lunch and dinner), before bed as well as each nappy change.		
8	Always change standing up, in all environments. Teach them to bend over, whilst standing, to be wiped.		
9	Be consistent and always follow the same routine when visiting the toilet (use routine suggested on information sheet)		
10	Give praise for each little step achieved, throughout the process, not just for wee/poo on the toilet. Rewards can be good but make them small and instant.		