

Learning to Use the Toilet

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Today's Topics

- Understanding importance of toilet training as an Activity of Daily Living (ADL)
- Identifying toilet learning problems
- Determining readiness
- Understanding the role of data collection
- Identifying strategies to support success
- Developing child-centered toileting routine

Before We Begin...

- Toilet training is unique to each child
- Toilet training is complex for every child
- Your child may have medical issues that impact success with toileting
- This workshop is not intended to serve as a diagnostic or clinical model
- This workshop focuses on behavioral strategies to support toileting success

Activities of Daily Living

The term "Activities of Daily Living," or ADLs, refers to the basic tasks of everyday life, such as eating, bathing, dressing, toileting, and transferring (walking) that most people are able to perform on a daily basis without assistance. When people are unable to perform these activities, they need help in order to cope, either from other human beings or mechanical devices, or both.

- Source: US Department of Health & Human Services, 2010



Introduction

- Toilet training requires patience, dedication and perseverance
- Toilet training can take up to a year to master
- Urine training usually comes first and bowel training and night training can take longer
- Be prepared for an increase in laundry during learning phase

Introduction (continued)

- Don't give up once you have your child in underwear (do not go back to diaper)
- Prior to starting any toilet training protocols or procedures, be sure child has been cleared by a physician (could be underlying medical factors, phobias, physical limitations, etc.)
- Establish baseline prior to start of training

Developmental Readiness Skills

- How does child communicate basic needs?
- Is child aware of his/her body?
- Does child have imitation skills?
- Does child understand language of toileting?



Signs of Readiness

- Over 18 months of age
- Showing an interest
- Demonstrating awareness of being wet or soiled
- Stays dry for 1-2 hour periods
- Pulls up and down own pants
- Independence with 70-80% of routine
- Begin by at least 4 years of age
- Will sit on toilet independently for 3-5 minutes
- Responds favorably to positive reinforcement

Toileting Routine

- Routine consists of more than just voiding in the toilet
- Task analysis to determine all steps
- Group activity – percentage/level of independence





Where to begin

- Encourage toileting routines with bathroom visits (wake up, before/after nap, before meals, before bath, before bedtime, before leaving house)
- Place items needed within easy reach; remove distractions
- Dress for success! Wear appropriate clothing for training (elastic waistband; no layers; no sweatpants; full length mirror)

First Steps

- Data collection is the first step to determine your child's voiding schedule
- Start with 15 minute checks and record if wet or dry for 2-3 days to establish pattern
- If dry, sit for 2 minute intervals and praise child for remaining dry (do not try if already wet)
- If wet remain neutral but explain to your child that his/her diaper is wet so they begin to understand the concept of wet/dry
- Increase dry pants checks to 30, 45, then 60 minutes once pattern is established



Reinforcement



- Choose a powerful reinforcer that is highly motivating that child can earn for voiding in toilet
- Keep reinforcer in clear container (out of reach for hearing impaired/within reach for visually impaired)
- Only allow access to reinforcer when child voids
- Select a second reinforcer (not as highly motivating) that can be used for reinforcing dry pants or independence with other areas of the routine

Identify Patterns

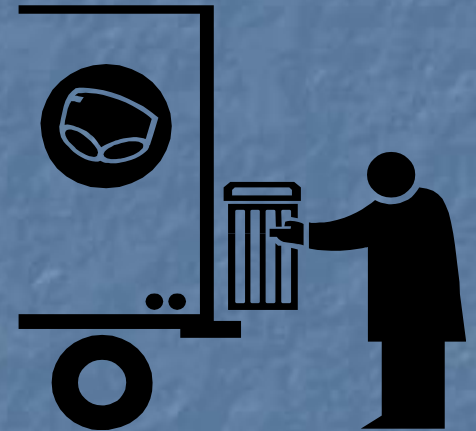
- Data will show approximately what times child is voiding (highlight when wet so that pattern is easy to read)
- Look for changes in body position or facial expression (pausing, facial straining, eyes watering, crouching)
- Tugging at or touching diaper area after a movement or voiding
- Child may assume a position or have a certain spot he/she goes to

Factors to Overcome

- Bear in mind that it takes longer to undo established habits (3 days to start a habit and 7-10 days to break it)
- Anxiety (may need to desensitize)
- Ability to sit
- Learned helplessness/prompt dependence
- Resistance to change (diaper has been child's toilet for 3-4+ years)

Fading Diapers

- Pull-ups allows child to feel wetness and have more independence
- Underwear over pull-ups; then
- Underwear under the pull-up
- Cold turkey



Consistency Across Settings

- Language
- Order of routine
- Position
- Visuals
- Placement of items in environment
- Reinforcement



Habit Training

- Establish time to urinate using data
- You may encourage fluid intake to allow for more opportunities for success prior to time to toilet
- Take child to the bathroom 2-3 minutes prior to the time he/she usually voids to “catch him/her”



Go on a Schedule



- Begin the day with 5 minutes on the toilet
- Use timer to predetermine time interval (e.g., 30 minutes, 45 minutes, 60 minutes)
- When timer goes off cue child to go to bathroom (When child starts urine flow, *say nothing*)
- Provide highest preferred reinforcer when child goes, paired with praise
- If child does not go, reset timer (may want to reduce next interval)

Establish Routine



- If child is not “ready” continue to go through the steps/behaviors of toileting
- Take to the bathroom every 1-2 hours
- Have child pull up/down own pants
- Reinforce dry pants
- Sit on toilet if dry and reinforce sitting
- If wet, use neutral tone of voice, minimal attention and “show” child wet pants paired with explanation, “your pants are wet” – do not have child sit
- Change standing up
- Wash hands

Initiation

- Last step
- Must master a scheduled routine prior to teaching initiation
- Teach child to initiate with visual or voice recording



Helpful Supports

- Visual schedule of routine
- Make bathroom comfortable
- Make sure child is in calm state prior to sitting on toilet
- Warm water play (to be faded ASAP)
- Stool for underneath feet for child to feel grounded/secure/safe

Problem Areas That May Impact Success

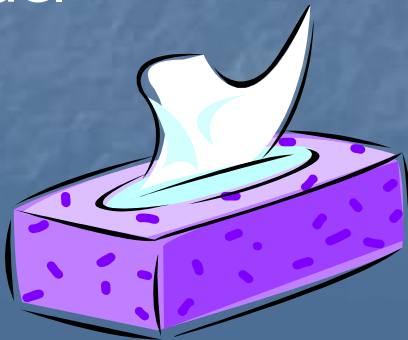


Problem Areas



Aversive to being cleaned

- Whole point – we don't want the cleaning part to be too reinforcing
- Consider temperature of material
- Use doll or favorite toy as model



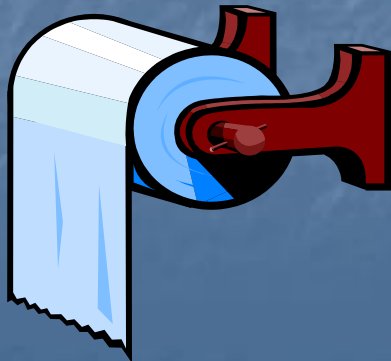
Plays in water

- Use water based sensory toys
- Structured tasks to keep hands busy
- Leave immediately after using bathroom- do not allow time to play

Problem Areas

Plays with toilet paper

- Remove
- Use tissues
- Tape
- Visual indicator
- Count sheets
- Practice tearing



Problem Areas

Perseveration with flushing

- Avoid/block access
- Keep hands busy
- Social story
- Visual schedule of routine
- Establish a rule that you only flush one time if there is something to flush



Fear of flushing

- New toilets may flush automatically (loud, unexpected)
- Alert child that flush is about to happen
- Social Story
- Flush and run





Problem Areas

Aim for boys

- Cheerios
- Food coloring (blue+ yellow=turns toilet water green)
- Soap (add to make bubbles)
- Social story
- Laminated target
- Seated position vs. standing

Splash guard sample



Problem Areas

Aim for boys – example of urinal that attaches to wall with suction cups at child's height



Resists Sitting

- Small potty (if child is too small to physically handle regular toilet, i.e., 2 yrs)
- Standing position for boys (if that does not interfere with cultural beliefs)
- Make toilet comfortable
- Provide light entertainment
- Sensory support
- Reinforce sitting
- Timers (song, visual tool)
- Model with doll or favorite toy
- Have child sit on your lap while you sit on toilet
- Child can sit with clothes on
- Take turns
- Cover toilet and slowly expand open area

Withholds Urine

- May be result of training when child was not developmentally ready
- May associate with painful urination in the past
- Could be a result of being taken too often
- Preoccupied with play (too busy)
- Previous training trials may have involved sitting for longer than 2-3 minute intervals



Suggestions for Withholding of Urination

- Leave water running while on toilet
- Warm water play
- Pour warm water into toilet
- Least amount of clothing possible (so they do not feel like they have a place to contain it)
- Begin with 30 minute checks and sit for no longer than 2 minutes if dry
- Find a highly reinforcing or motivating activity in schedule (i.e. movie, music) to teach "First pee-pee, then video"

Bowel Training

- Success often happens later than urine
- Typically developing children report being scared to have a movement on the toilet
- May save for going at home where they feel comfortable and safe

Resistance to Bowel Training

- Fear of losing part of body
- Excessive crying, anxiety, not relaxed
- Inconsistent routine/schedule
- Stool may be hard/painful
- May be result of having to sit too long in past training trials
- Enjoy/used to feeling of soiled diaper (sensory related)
- Dislike sight or smell (sensory aversions)
- Crave the attention they gain when being cleaned (negative or positive)
- Used to certain position (standing, squatting)

Bowel Training Suggestions

- Standing changes, place poop in potty, have changer flush it away and say "poop goes in potty"
- Least amount of clothing possible
- Do not provide diaper
- Can begin with hovering over toilet, until used to sitting position
- Try reading Taro Gomi's book "Everyone Poops" at least once a day
- Give child choices about other things throughout day (which cereal to eat, shirt to wear) to give control in other ways

Practical Solutions and Incentives for Motivation



Incentives that Work!

Sticker Chart



- Create a day-to-day chart and decorate it with the child's favorite superhero or TV character. After each successful trip to bathroom, he/she can place sticker on
- Variation – have every family member use a chart each time they go

Incentives that Work!

Drink and Wet Doll

- Buy a potty training “drink and wet” doll and have toddler teach her baby how to go to the bathroom. By teaching the doll, toddler will be training herself without even knowing it.



Potty Log

- Purchase or make from scrapbook paper a journal and use it to write a personalized story of the child’s journey from diapers to being potty trained. Have the child star as the hero. After each successful trip, add a little bit to the story

Incentives that Work!

Coloring Book

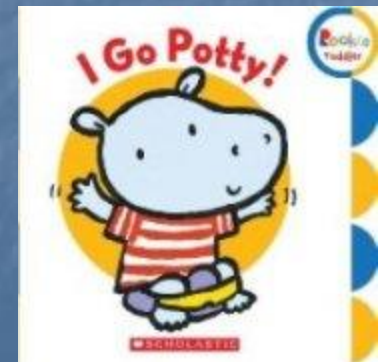
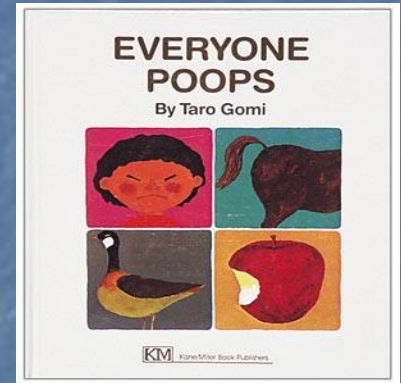
- Let the child color a drawing after each trip to the bathroom. After the child is fully potty trained, the coloring book will serve as a positive reminder of this big achievement (and highlights child's art, too)

Decorate the Potty

- Using stickers is an easy way to decorate the potty chair. Let toddler place favorite stickers on the potty – having a personalized chair will make child more excited to train

Incentives that Work!

- Books can be incentives
 - Keep a small supply of books in the bathroom that are only for use while on the toilet
 - Get child comfortable in bathroom by having him sit on the toilet fully clothed as you read a book. When the child is ready, have him sit without the diaper
 - Take a trip to the bookstore and have the child pick out new books, keeping potty books for reading only while in bathroom



Incentives that Work!

Door Hanger

- Make the bathroom a fun place by having toddler decorate a door hanger and signs with personal stickers, markers, and puffy paint.



Reward Bag

- Put several inexpensive toys and stickers into a colorful bag. Every time toddler uses the toilet, allow him to take one surprise out of the bag





Incentives that Work!



Big Kids Underwear

- Let child pick out new underwear with bright patterns or favorite TV characters and tell him he is ready to wear them like big kids. He may want to try the underwear on over his diaper first, but the curiosity can lead to success

Help from his "Lovey"

If the toddler is attached to his comfort item, let him take that to the potty with him. It will help give him a sense of security as he moves into this next big step

Making Time for Toilet Training

- Habit Training
 - A great first step
- Schedule Training
 - Promotes consistency while supporting toilet training steps
- More intensive training – “Boot camp”

Prior to Starting a “Boot Camp” Home Program

- Determine your family’s needs and priorities (feeding, toileting, dressing, community outings, etc.)
 - Is it important to you that child is somewhat independent with life skills?
- Collaborate with school team to promote generalization across settings
- Ensure child has medical release to participate in toilet training program

Boot Camp (continued)

- Set aside block of time (2-3 days)
- Helpful if child has experienced some degree of success prior to start
- Remove competing demands on your time
- Remain in/close to bathroom
- Identify strong reinforcer to be used only for urination and at no other time
- Have all materials on hand prior to start

Toilet Training Steps

1. Dress for success – less is more
2. Encourage fluids
3. Work with child at a small table near bathroom on mastered tasks while encouraging fluids
4. After 15 minutes, direct child to “Pee in potty” using a first/then visual stating “First pee in potty, then (reinforcer).”

Toilet Training Steps

5. Sit child on toilet until he goes (no more than 5-10 minutes – use timer)
6. Provide reinforcement for sitting
7. If child goes, provide highly reinforcing item and praise immediately
8. Have child stand up and pull up clothing
9. Go back to table tasks and continue encouraging fluids

What if he/she doesn't go?

- If child does not go say "It's okay, we'll try again later." Direct child to stand, pull up pants, etc.
- Check child every 5 minutes to see if dry
- Have child place hand on pants to check
 - If dry, provide lots of praise!
 - If wet, tell child in neutral tone that he/she is supposed to go in toilet, not pants but otherwise do not provide attention; change clothing

Mastery of Steps

- As child achieves greater success, communication device/visual should be available so that child can indicate the need to go (but initiation is not main goal)
- Use data sheet (samples in packet)
- Take child to bathroom in 15-20 minutes if child's body language indicates a need to go

If he voids during this time on toilet:	If he does NOT void during this time:
provide tangible reinforcement of a highly preferred song played through and verbal praise immediately while he is still seated	direct him to stand up and go "back to the table" using minimal prompting and little attention while directing him back
then direct him to stand up and flush after the song has played	do not have him flush
direct him "back to the table" and engage in easy, mastered tasks for the next 15-minute interval, letting him choose which tasks he wants to do first, next, etc.	engage in easy, mastered tasks for the next 15-minute interval, letting him choose which task he wants to do first, next, etc.

Additional Thoughts

- Set an amount of time/days you are willing to commit to intense training
- Initiation should not be a goal during this training
- Focus should also be on fading prompt levels for child going into bathroom, sitting on toilet, standing up, pulling up or down pants, leaving bathroom

Handling Accidents

- Be prepared – accidents will occur
- If possible wear only long undershirt w/o underwear; ideal for catching accidents
- Do not have child sit on toilet if accident occurs
- Above all, remain neutral and calm
- Have child participate in changing as much as possible (in standing position)



Encouraging Thoughts

- We understand it can be difficult time for both you and your child
- Have a support system in place before starting (friends, spouse, peers, siblings)
- Keep expectations realistic
- Do not compare your child to others (each child develops at his/her own pace)
- Take a break when you or your child are exhausted
- Remember to use your sense of humor

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Websites

- www.Do2Learn.com (website has visuals for self-care/toileting routines)
- www.AutismToiletTraining.com
- www.Integrations.catalog.com
- www.TEACCH.com/toilet.htm
- <https://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/personalized-stories> (website has templates to create social stories)