

Toilet Training Resource Pack



This pack provides hints and tips to help you facilitate independence in toileting with the children you work with.

Please use the advice and strategies contained in this pack before you make a referral to the occupational therapy service. If you feel you require further information click [here](#) where you can also book onto one of our education sessions.

Being independent in toileting is a difficult skill to master and requires a range of skills;

- Mobility and Transfers
- Dressing Skills
- Planning
- Hand washing

Successful toilet training can be demanding for both the child and the carer. From the child/young person it requires sensory awareness, balance, the ability to communicate and sitting tolerance, they need to be comfortable and feel secure. If a child/young person does not feel balanced and secure when sitting on the toilet, they may feel very anxious. If they are concentrating really hard on being able to maintain their sitting position on the toilet they will find it really difficult to concentrate on actually using the toilet, resulting in less success. You should contact Occupational Therapy if you think your child/young person may need additional support when sitting on the toilet.

From the carer, it requires time, patience and perseverance. Toilet training can take a long time for some children/young people to master, parents/carers may begin by being enthusiastic and giving lots of praise, however after time this can diminish. A mutual understanding of communication is also necessary, does the child/young person use verbal communication, makaton, or their own signs, symbols and pictures/photographs. If signs and symbols are being used it is important to make sure that all those working with the child/young person are using the same ones to ensure a consistent approach is being used. Always use the same words to ensure understanding, for example; "going to the toilet" or "going for a wee wee".

Understanding Toileting

Children/young people follow seven stages of toilet training as they develop:

1. Show interest in toilet/potty
2. Express the need to use the toilet
3. Will sit on the toilet
4. Will use the toilet
5. Using the toilet if previously used the potty
6. Consistently uses the toilet at home
7. Uses the toilet in the community

Look and Listen

It is important to listen and observe the child/young person and they will tell you when they are ready to start toilet training. Starting too early can make the whole process take longer! Here are some things to look out for to help you recognise when they are ready:

- Young children need their bladder to be at least half full before they can wee.
- Are they interested in using the toilet?
- Do they stay dry for a couple of hours?
- Have they developed a pattern of opening their bowels or bladder?
- The child/young person needs to be able to identify when they are wet.
- Do they seem uncomfortable when wet or dirty?
- Do they grunt or squat when they open their bowels?
- Do they tell you when they are about to wee?
- Can they sit for about 5 minutes?

Potty Training

Here are some things to try to help encourage the child/young person to use the potty or toilet:

- Have a conversation with parents/carers to discuss what stage the child is at and what strategies if any they are using at home to ensure consistency. Use a notebook or home-school diary to communicate the child's progress with parents/carers.
- Take the whole class or groups of children/young people from the class to the toilet at the same time so that the child/young person realises that going to the toilet is something everyone does. This may also help them realise what the bathroom is for and make a connection - use signs and symbols to reinforce this.
- Use the potty when you expect to see success to make it as positive as possible.
- Ask parents/carers to dress the child in practical clothing and send spare pants and trousers into school in case of accidents.
- Ignore saying anything negative about accidents, just clean up and talk about something else, talking about the accident can reinforce this behaviour as they child may realise that they get attention for wetting themselves.

Keep Going

If toilet training seems to be going backwards, increase the level of praise again to regain momentum. It's easy to get out of the habit of praising success. Ignore accidents completely and try not to show disappointment if they don't do anything on the potty/toilet. If child/young person wets themselves when not on the toilet, take them to the toilet as quickly as possible, try to get them there so some of the wee goes in the toilet and they continue to make the connection between weeing and the toilet.

What if the Child is not Aware

There are a number of ways you can teach a child/young person to recognise when they are wet or dirty; again this is something you will need to discuss with parents/carers.

Hints and Tips

- Communication - if the child/young person is non verbal think about ways to help them communicate, this could be using signs, symbols or photographs. Speak to Speech and Language Therapy about what the child/young person's level of communication is and the best ways to communicate with them.

- Often the sensation of wetting/soiling heightens awareness when the child/young person stops wearing nappies and this can encourage bladder control. It's often a good idea to start encouraging awareness during the summer holidays as children/young people can run around in the garden without wearing nappies. Discuss this with parents/carers and be ready to start toileting training when the child/young person starts back at school in September.
- Kitchen roll in nappies can help with the very effective absorbency of nappies.
- Change nappies in the bathroom to encourage an association with this room.
- Develop a toileting routine to encourage awareness of the sensation experienced.

Toileting Patterns

Children/young people usually follow a toileting pattern; here are some tips to encourage a pattern;

- Regulate mealtimes and drinks; this is usually easier in school than at home, as the school day follows a structured routine.
- Having a warm drink can stimulate the muscles in the intestines encouraging bowel movements.
- Give the child/young person a big drink 30 minutes before they are expected to need the toilet to increase the chances of success.
- Start to fill in a training chart and check the nappy at half hour intervals this will help you determine a pattern of when and how often the child/young person wets/soils.
- After a couple of weeks you can then take the child/young person to the toilet at set times based on your observations.

Potty Vs Toilet

Children/young people should feel safe and secure, in order to sit on the toilet they must; be able to balance, have good sitting tolerance, have their feet supported, feel comfortable and be able to relax!

You may have to motivate the child/young person, to do this you need to make the experience fun and positive;

- Play on the potty/toilet - blowing games such as blowing bubbles; this relaxes the child/young person and can also stimulate the muscles to encourage them to open their bladder.
- Sing a song

- Monitor the time spent on the potty to prevent boredom.
- Encourage the child/young person to rest their hands on their lower tummy to develop an awareness of their muscles and when they are working.
- If you continue to encourage a routine without any success you may wish to discuss this with parents/carers and suggest that they discuss it with their consultant if they too have not had any success.

Children with ASD and Learning Difficulties

Children/young people with ASD and learning difficulties often find toilet training particularly difficult as it involves; changes in routine, increased expectations, understanding of a complex process including planning and sequencing, a range of sensory experiences.

Hints and Tips

Try to be consistent and use visual aids to support the child/young person's understanding, you could also try using social stories to aid understanding. Try and change routines gradually for example, start off sitting on the toilet with the lid down to wash hand and face. Don't encourage ritualistic or obsessive behaviours as these can be very difficult to break. Talk to parents/carers to discuss what strategies they are using, share ideas and ensure a consistent approach.

Sensory Difficulties

Some children/young people can be very sensitive to sensory input such as touch, sounds and smells, others can be under sensitive to these things. You need to bear this in mind when toilet training as certain sensitivities may impact on success of toilet training. Here are some examples:

The sound of the toilet flushing - Some children/young people are very sensitive to noise and so this sound can make them upset and anxious, feelings which we don't want to be associated with toileting. You should therefore allow the child/young person time to prepare for this sound before it happens, they might want to put some earphones on when they flush to block out the noise.

The feel of the toilet seat - Some children/young people are very sensitive to touch and they may feel that the seat is too cold, hard or too hot. Try to compensate for this when possible so that the experience is not negative for the child/young person.

Reluctance to be touched or get hands dirty - Some children/young people may not like to be touched so you need to try and prepare the child/young person for this when helping them wipe or get dressed. Talk them through the process, you could go through a visual schedule specifically for toileting with them so they know what to expect. Some children/young people have a fear of getting their hands dirty, again go through the process with them before so they know what to expect. You could also try some calming and deep touch activities to help prepare them such as; massaging hands and body, weight bearing activities such as lying over a therapy ball on their stomach and walking forwards on their hands, rocking forwards and backwards or side to side is also very calming to the sensory system.

If you require further advice regarding sensory difficulties please contact the Occupational Therapy department.

Smearing

Some children/young people smear their poo, this may be due to a lack of understanding, behavioural difficulties or they may be sensory seeking. It may be that the child/young person is bored and does not know what else to do in this time. It may be that the child/young person has done this in the past and received a lot of attention from doing it. It could also be that the texture or smell is something that the child/young person enjoys.

Hints and Tips

- Minimise social interaction or talking whilst cleaning up to ensure they child/young person does not receive any positive reinforcement for this behaviour.
- Wear clothing that discourages this behaviour, such as clothes where the child/young person can not get their hands inside their pants, some children/young people wear all in one outfits - you will need to talk to parents/carers about this.
- If the child/young person appears to like the texture consider encouraging them to play with other similar textures such as play doh, shaving foam or gloop (cornflour and water).

Refusing to use the Toilet or Potty

When children/young people first stop wearing nappies, some may hold their wee and poo until they can go in a nappy. This may be because they

find it difficult to learn a new way of toileting. It could be because they are uncomfortable on the potty or toilet. It may also be because the firm pressure of the nappy helps them relax.

Tips

Try cutting a small hole out of the nappy so the child/young person can wee through it into the toilet/potty, this way they can still feel the comfort and security of wearing a nappy but they are using the toilet/potty. Gradually make the hole larger so that eventually they only have a section of the nappy around the waist, this way you can slowly remove the nappy entirely.

Bottom Wiping

In order to achieve success with bottom wiping the child/young person needs to be able to demonstrate a good range of movement for reaching, the ability to balance whilst wiping, body awareness, touch awareness and control.

Hints and Tips

- Encourage the child/young person to stand to wipe if possible, they may need a grab rail to help them balance. It may also help them to have a stool which they can place one foot on to make wiping easier.
- Guiding the child/young person's hand so they can develop an understanding of where to reach for - play games to encourage this skill such as getting the child/young person to pass a balloon through and around their legs.
- Use wipes or damp tissues so that the child/young person can feel where they have wiped.
- Encourage the child/young person to look at the tissue they have used before throwing it into the toilet so that they can see for themselves if they are clean or not.

Hitting the Spot

When boys are able to distinguish between when they need to open their bowels or their bladder they may like to stand to wee. Some boys can struggle with aiming successfully, as this task requires; good hand-eye coordination, balance and concentration.

Hints and Tips

- Ensure the room is free from distractions such as noise by closing the door, try not to interrupt concentration.

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- Consider putting ping pong balls or cereal in the toilet for boys to aim at - don't worry these items can not block the toilet.

Poo Facts and Suggestions

- Ensure the child/young person has lots of fruit and vegetables and drinks lots.
- Sitting on the toilet after mealtimes is more productive, eating pushes food through the bowel.
- Consider poo in a positive light.
- The rule of three - no more than 3 a day and no less than 3 a week.
- Tip the poo from the nappy into the toilet so the child/young person can learn where it goes, say "bye bye poo, off to poo land".
- Change the child/young person in the bathroom so they can associate the room correctly.

Resources

<http://www.promocon.co.uk/aboutpromocon.shtml> - information about toileting.

www.fledglings.org.uk/ - products and advice for parents and carers of disabled children (e.g. suits to prevent children from smearing).

<http://www.dotolearn.com/> - symbols.

<http://www.autism.org.uk> - social stories about toileting as well as other resources.

<http://www.coventrycarers.org.uk> (0247663 2972) - A confidential service to support the needs of carers including supplying information about benefits/finance, respite, support groups.