

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Occupational Therapy Tip Sheet</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>TOILET TRAINING</b></p>	
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**What is toilet training?** Toilet training is the process of teaching a child to use a toilet or potty. It requires the child to recognize their body signals for urinating and having a bowel movement. Toilet training is a complex process impacted by physical, sensory, and environmental factors.

**Why is toilet training important?** Toilet training is important as it helps the child gain a skill of daily living. It promotes independence, body awareness, and a sense of control.

**When should toilet training start?** Children develop at different rates. However, most children do not gain bladder and bowel control until 24 to 30 months of age. Toilet training should start when both the child and caregiver show signs of readiness.

**What are signs of toileting readiness for the child?** The child should show several of the following:

- Interest in the bathroom or in the toileting process (pretending to use toilet paper, flushing the toilet, etc.)
- Wanting to observe others using the bathroom
- Periods of dryness of 2 hours or more and/or wakes up dry from a nap
- Bowel movements have become regular and predictable
- Indicates diaper is dirty, asks to wear underwear or asks to use the toilet
- Discomfort/upset when diaper is dirty
- Healthy bowels (no diarrhea or constipation)
- No big stresses or life changes (a move, new sibling, etc.)
- Ability to sit for 3-5 minutes when placed on the toilet
- Ability to follow basic instructions

**What are caregiver needs for toileting readiness?** For toilet training success, all caregivers must be consistent and:

- Set up and follow a consistent routine for potty/toilet time (when they wake up, before leaving the house, before a new play activity, after a meal, before bedtime, etc.).
- Provide clothes that can be easily removed (elastic waistbands, avoid fasteners, comfortable underwear, etc.) and spare clothes for accidents.
- Use easy terms like “poop” for bowel movements or “pee” for urine.
- Pay close attention to the child’s cues (squirming, squatting, etc.) that their bladder or bowels need emptying. This helps the child to learn their own body cues.
- Remain calm and patient at all times, including when sitting on the

toilet and especially when accidents occur.

- Offer praise and/or implement a reward system (favourite candy, sticker, etc.) that they can only get when accomplishing a toileting goal (sitting, voiding, wiping, etc.).
- Provide a comfortable bathroom environment (potty chair, ring reducer, footrest, pleasant scents, etc.). Calming lights and sounds (running water, music/song, etc.) or a favourite soap and towel may be helpful.

#### **Helpful strategies and tips:**

- Let the child play with the potty to build comfort.
- Have the child sit on the potty chair when you or a sibling is using the toilet (pants and diaper may be on or off).
- Limit sitting on the toilet to no more than 5 minutes
- Stay with the child, talk and/or read a book together while sitting on the toilet.
- Boys should sit when learning to use the toilet as it can be harder to control starting and stopping urine flow when standing.
- Provide lots of fluids so the child needs to pee during the day and make sure the child has fruit and fiber in their diet to keep stools soft. Reduce fluids before bedtime.
- If your child soils their diaper, tip the stool out of the diaper and into the potty or toilet with the child watching so they see where it needs to go.
- Some children learn by pretending to teach a doll to go potty. Get a doll that has a hole in its mouth and diaper area. Your child can feed and "teach" the doll to pull down its pants and use the potty.



- Accidents are normal and expected. They are more likely to occur when the child is ill, upset with a change or preoccupied in play. Remain calm and point out the accident without blame or shame. Remind the child that pee or poop goes in the toilet/potty.
- Nighttime control usually comes after daytime control.

#### **Special Considerations:**

- Clothing Modifications: pant loops, elastic waist pants, loose clothing, zipper pull or ring
- Seating Modifications: sitting backwards on the toilet, a potty chair, a ring reducer, foot rest, hand rails or a toileting system (consult the child's occupational therapist)



- Wiping Modifications: use wet wipes, extended reach wiping tool, bidet seat
- Sensory Modifications: headphones, dimmed lights, air freshener, defer flushing the toilet until the child is out of the room, comfortable toilet seat
- Behaviour Modifications: reward/sticker chart, potty toy or book, a visual schedule, make it fun, use positive talk about toileting
- Environmental Modifications: plastic lined mattress cover or place a sheet of plastic under the sheets, rubber training pants over the underwear (a diaper may be worn over the underwear, but can be confusing for some children)

### **Toileting Hygiene:**

- Your child may need assistance initially with wiping and getting clean. Teach them how much toilet paper to use, direction of wiping (girls go front to back), and looking at the toilet paper after they wipe to ensure they are clean.
- Washing hands after toileting is important. Your child should be able to access the sink with a sturdy stool. Soap and towels should be easy to reach and pleasant to touch.