



one step at a time



A parent's guide to toilet skills for children with special needs

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Overview



One Step at a Time is a guide to toilet training for parents whose child has special needs.

You may have 'put off' toilet training or believe that it is not possible to train your child because of their special needs. However, given the right kind of help, children with special needs can learn to manage going to the toilet, either completely on their own, or with some assistance. This is very important for their independence as they grow up.

By following the five steps in this booklet you can work with your child to develop the skills of toileting.

We encourage parents to start toilet training, or start thinking about it, when a child is around two years old.

Is this booklet for you and your child?

Whilst this booklet is written for children with special needs it can only give general information. You need to consider the specific needs and requirements of your child. As a parent you know your child best.

Children with specific disabilities such as spina bifida or cerebral palsy require a special bladder and bowel management program. If you have any queries about whether the information in this booklet is suitable for your child's needs talk to your paediatrician.

Using this booklet

One Step at a Time guides you through five major steps of toilet training:

- Step 1 Setting the scene
- Step 2 Developing the skills needed
- Step 3 Raising awareness
- Step 4 Using the toilet for wee and poo
- Step 5 Night time control.

Each step brings the child closer to the goal of being able to go to the toilet on their own. Once you read through each step you will see that toilet training is a complex task made up of a number of skills that your child has to do in a set order. Learning each skill may take some time for your child. So think of toilet training as a process where your child is learning to put together a number of skills that may take several months or longer. Don't try to rush through the steps. Take the time your child needs.

The Toileting skills checklist on page 9 will help you work out what stage your child is at now.

Included with this booklet are a number of tip sheets to help you with particular issues. The tip sheets can be found on the disc at the back; they are presented in this way to make the booklet less bulky. Have a browse to see what's there and what will be useful to you.

One Step at a Time refers to 'your child' and 'they' rather than 'he'/'she', and when referring to parents also includes carers. Note that the word 'wee' is used rather than urine and urination, and 'poo' rather than stool or faeces and defecation.

Toilet training a child with special needs can be hard work. It can be frustrating. Progress may be slow. But you should be proud of yourself and your child for taking positive steps in this direction.

Toilet training: a step towards independence



Being able to go to the toilet on one's own is an important life skill. It is more than simply going to the toilet without the help of another person; it is also about having personal control.

For parents, toilet training can seem to be a challenge, especially if your child has special needs. Having special needs does not mean your child cannot develop all or some of the skills of being toilet trained. It may just take longer.

By taking the process one step at a time many parents are surprised at what their child can achieve, particularly if they have been told that their child will never learn to use the toilet. Our advice is to be positive, patient and persistent!

How control of wee and poo develops

At birth our bodies pass wee and poo automatically. We don't make a conscious decision about doing this. Gradually, between the ages of two and three years, we gain control over wee and poo. This is the sequence of what usually happens:

- no poo in the night nappy
- control of poo when awake
- control of wee when awake – longer time between wees
- control of wee when asleep.

This sequence is only a guide as each child varies. Don't worry if your child's control develops in a different sequence.

The other skills needed for toileting independently

To go to the toilet on their own a child needs to have the following skills:

- mobility – be able to get to and from the toilet
- sitting – be able to sit down on the toilet and maintain the position
- communicating – either using language, sign or pictures to indicate the need to go to the toilet
- dressing – be able to remove clothing then replace clothing.

The table opposite, *Skills development for independent toileting*, breaks down each of these skills into smaller steps. The steps are colour coded to match the colour of the five steps in this booklet so that you can easily see where a particular skill is covered.

A word on being ready

Perhaps you've been told to wait until your child shows signs that they are ready for toilet training. You may have been told to look out for:

- Interest – your child expresses curiosity in watching others go to the toilet.
- Dryness – their nappy stays dry for up to two hours, showing they are able to store wee in the bladder.
- Nappy issues – they may refuse to wear nappies, or may try to take the nappy off after a poo.
- Awareness – your child can tell you they're doing a poo or a wee as they do it, or can tell you straight after.
- Attention – they have the ability to sit in one position for two to five minutes.

Skill development for independent toileting

MORE INDEPENDENT	COMMUNICATION: indicates with word, sign or picture	MOBILITY: getting to and from the toilet	SITTING: sitting on the toilet	DRESSING	BLADDER AND BOWEL CONTROL: knowing when to go and does wee or poo in the toilet
	Asks and can wait if needs to then goes to the toilet independently	Takes self to toilet and sits independently	Sits down on the toilet independently and stays until completed toileting	Removes and replaces clothing independently	Uses the toilet for wee and poo and is otherwise dry and clean
	Asks to go to the toilet using word, sign or picture	Needs verbal prompts, i.e. directions, but is physically independent	Sits unassisted, but may need attention or praise to stay sitting	Actively attempts to remove clothing	Uses toilet regularly with only occasional 'accidents'
	Indicates the need to go to toilet	Needs aids or physical assistance to walk	Placed on the toilet but sits unassisted. May need rail and step	Actively assists when clothing is removed	Regular toilet routine is established and uses the toilet more than having 'accidents'
LESS INDEPENDENT	Taken to the toilet as part of a routine. May show picture	Needs help to be wheeled and transferred	Fully assisted by an adult and requires specialised equipment	Co-operates when clothing is removed	Uses the toilet when placed on it but all other times uses nappy
	In nappies, no toileting	Changed on change table	Is not sitting on the toilet	Carer removes clothes before nappy change or being placed on toilet	No awareness, is in nappies all the time

Key

- See Step 1
- See Step 2
- See Step 3
- See Step 4
- See Step 5

Many children will not tell you or indicate when they are ready for toilet training. Nappies are just too good at keeping them feeling dry and comfortable. So it is up to you to decide when the time is right for toilet training. For the child with special needs, the following checklist will tell you if they are ready:

- stays dry for around 1½ to 2 hours
- is not constipated
- can sit on the toilet/potty
- can follow simple instructions.

The *Toileting skills checklist* opposite will help you make this decision.

Are you ready?

Family and friends often give you a lot of advice about toilet training. They are well meaning but may not understand your child's special needs. Don't feel pressured into something you or your child are not ready to do. Toilet training takes time and effort. Ask yourself, 'Is this a good time for me to be doing this?' Take into account:

- What's happening in your life – have any major changes just occurred or are anticipated in the near future, such as a new baby, moving house?
- Are you able to organise support from family and friends so you can lean on them if you need to?
- The difference having your child nappy-free will make. Think about the time and money you will be saving and how much easier it will be to go out with your child.

There may be no perfect time to start but getting organised and having support will help you and your child with this important process.

Where to begin

If you are starting out for the first time, Step 1 on page 10 is the place to begin. You may find it useful to identify some of the toileting skills your child may have developed already. Use the *Toileting skills checklist* on the next page and the tip sheet *Goal setting to help your child learn* to help you make a plan to get started. The checklist and the tip sheet will also help you if you are starting again after a break from toilet training.

Help with toilet training

You are not alone when you are in the process of toilet training your child. Page 22 lists people, organisations and resources to help you. In addition, talk to everyone involved with your child – child care, school, family, friends – so you all have the same approach.

a step towards independence

Toileting skills check list



In using this checklist, insert a ✓ if your child can do this skill.

Keep this record to help you chart your child's progress with toilet training.

My child's toileting skills	Date	Skill present	Prompts or help given
Goes to the toilet without any prompting and has no accidents with wee or poo			
Tells me or signs the need to go to the toilet			
Tells me or indicates after a wee or poo in the nappy			
Holds on to wee for at least 1½ hours during the day			
Co-operates when taken to the toilet			
Follows instructions to go to the toilet			
Can get to the toilet – with or without an aid			
Can pull down pants			
Can get on to the toilet			
Can sit on the toilet up to 2 minutes unsupervised			
Can sit on the toilet up to 2 minutes with supervision			
Can wee in the toilet			
Can poo in the toilet			
Can get off the toilet			
Can wipe bottom			
Can shake penis			
Can pull up pants			
Can flush toilet			
Can wash hands			
Can dry hands			

Step 1: Setting the scene



Begin this step by the time your child is 2 years old. This first step is mainly about making changes that start you on the path to toilet training.

We suggest that you begin this step by the time your child is 2 years old because this is when most children develop awareness of a full bladder and bowel. It can be very difficult to persuade a five-year-old that the nappy is not the toilet!

Establishing healthy habits

Developing the following habits is good for your child's health and well-being. These healthy habits also assist in the process of toilet training.

Eating well – encourage your child to eat a wide variety of foods especially fruit and vegetables and wholemeal breads and cereal products. These foods provide a range of essential vitamins and minerals, and help prevent constipation. It is important to avoid constipation as it can make toilet training more difficult. The tip sheet *Constipation* covers this issue in some detail.

Drinking well – encourage your child to drink six water-based drinks spread evenly throughout the day. Drinking regularly means wee is steadily produced and the bladder fills and empties regularly. It is important that your child has the feeling of a full bladder several times during the day. Fluid is also important for a healthy bowel as it helps to keep the poo soft and easy to pass.

Exercise each day – regular exercise improves mobility and posture and helps keep the bowels working so poo is passed every day or so. Remember poo should be soft, formed, and easily passed.

Sitting on the toilet or potty at regular intervals during the day – after meals is a good time to start sitting the child on the toilet or potty as the food may stimulate the bowels to work. Encourage your child to use the correct sitting posture. The tip sheet *The Toilet position* explains how to do this.

The tip sheet *Food, fluids and fun! Eating and drinking well for successful toilet training* gives more suggestions for establishing healthy habits.

Getting into a different routine with nappy changing

Try to change your child in or near the toilet/bathroom so they begin to connect wee and poo with the toilet. Where possible, change your child in the standing position as this helps make them aware of a different routine. Change the nappy quickly without play.

If possible, place your child on the toilet or potty when the nappy is off so they get the feel. Do not expect them to use the toilet or potty at this stage; you are just introducing them to a different type of seat. The section *Getting the equipment you'll need* (see opposite) discusses how to make sure your child is safe and feels safe when sitting on the toilet.

Talking about and showing what happens in the toilet

Have an 'open door approach' so your child can watch you use the toilet. Show and explain to your child that this is where poo goes. If possible, tip the poo from the nappy into the toilet.

Using the words wee and poo

Decide on the words you and your family will use for wee and poo. It is important that everyone – child care, school, family and friends – uses the same words so your child does not get confused with different words meaning the same thing. These are the words your child will themselves use later on when asking to go to the toilet.

Use the chosen words at nappy-changing times so your child can learn the difference between wee and poo. At nappy change talk positively about how they have done wee or poo in their nappy: 'Clever boy, you've done a big wee', 'Good girl, you've done a poo'.

Learning about wet and dry

Talk about the difference between wet and dry at nappy change, and about washing hands, having a shower or bath. 'Your hands are wet (then dried), now they are dry.'

Getting the equipment you'll need

All children need some form of equipment to help them be and feel safe on the toilet. Insert rings to reduce the size of the toilet seat and toilet-seat frames are readily available in childcare and variety shops. A footstool is needed as your child's feet should be on a firm surface, not dangling in the air. The tip sheet *The toilet position* gives the correct sitting position on the toilet. The tip sheet *The toilet area* describes ways you can make the toilet an inviting and safe place.

If your child has poor sitting balance they will probably require specialised equipment. Discuss equipment with your occupational therapist or physiotherapist.

Skills introduced and developed in this step

- Establishing healthy habits.
- Getting familiar with the toilet.
- Beginning to sit on the toilet/potty.
- Understanding wet and dry.
- Deciding and using the words for wee and poo.

Tip sheets

- Constipation.
- Food, fluids & fun! Eating and drinking well for successful toilet training.
- The toilet position.
- The toilet area.

on the path to toilet training...

Step 2 : Developing skills needed



A child needs to have a number of skills before they can use the toilet on their own – it's not just about being able to do wee or poo in the right place.

That is the main event but to go independently your child needs to be able to:

- recognise the need to go to the toilet
- tell you – verbal, sign or picture*
- hang on
- find the toilet*
- get to the toilet*
- pull down clothes and underpants*
- sit on the toilet*
- use the toilet for wee or poo or both
- wipe – this is usually the last skill children learn as it is difficult
- shake – boys need to be taught to shake their penis after doing wee
- get off the toilet*
- dress and undress*
- flush the toilet*
- wash and dry hands*.

The highlighted skills (*) are the 'support' skills needed to be independent with toileting. Encourage your child to practice these skills, gradually putting them together before the focus moves to actually doing wee and poo in the toilet.

This section focuses on:

- sitting on the toilet
- dressing and undressing – pulling underpants up and down
- knowing how to use the toilet.

Some decisions to make before you start: potty v toilet

We recommend that you start where you intend to finish – your child using the toilet. By starting with the toilet and not the potty you have made it easier for your child as they don't have to learn to use the potty and then learn to use the toilet. Make sure you have the right equipment for your child to be safe and feel safe on the toilet. See page 22 for information on where to get assistance with this.

Listed in the table below are the advantages and disadvantages of both to help you make your decision.

Potty v toilet

Potty	Toilet
Is small, easy to use, non-threatening and comes in bright designs.	You are simplifying the learning process for your child.
Promotes independence, as a child may be able to use it without help.	There is no transition to another piece of equipment.
If you forget it when you go out, your child may have to use a toilet anyway, which maybe confusing.	A toilet can simply be flushed, but a potty must be cleaned after each use.
	Toilets are everywhere but a potty has to be taken on outings.

How to use rewards and praise

Rewards and praise are important tools you will be using to teach your child the skills of toileting. Here is some information about rewards and how to use them.

Rewards are commonly used to engage children in developing new skills. They have two purposes, to give feedback and to help with motivation.

Feedback is very important in learning new skills. By giving a reward you are telling your child that they have performed the skill correctly. A reward can also help motivate your child to co-operate and repeat the skill. In giving a reward you are responding to your child's achievements, thus increasing the chances of the skill being repeated.

The following points need to be kept in mind in relation to rewards:

1. Reward need to be appropriate. It is not necessary to offer big or expensive rewards. Choose something your child likes that is quick, easy to give and low cost or no cost.

Social rewards such as a smile, hug, clapping, or singing a song may be all that is required. Other reward ideas are playing a game, reading a story together, choosing a special drink or DVD. Stickers and star charts are another option if your child is able to understand this reward system.

2. Give rewards immediately, do not wait. Have the reward ready. Give the reward every time your child does the skill you are working on. (If rewards are not given straight away they lose their power to encourage the behaviour you are rewarding or your child may be confused about what they did to earn the reward.)
3. Combine rewards with praise so your child knows what behaviour or skill is being rewarded. Praise should be specific and given enthusiastically: 'That's great, you've done a wee in the toilet!'
4. Keep the reward specifically for the toileting skill so your child doesn't get confused about why they are getting the reward. It is a good idea to have one reward for wee and one for poo. Usually the poo reward is bigger and more exciting to the child as it is given less often than the wee reward.
5. Ensure everyone who is involved in the toilet training process knows what rewards are being given.

6. Gradually fade out the rewards as your child masters the skill you are teaching. Keep up the verbal praise all the way through. Do not stop rewards suddenly but start decreasing how often you give them, perhaps every second or third time. After a while you can reduce to every fourth or fifth time. Continue in this way until you are rewarding now and then. Your child will stop asking for the reward as they become more independent.

When your child has learnt to use the toilet, rewards will no longer be needed. Occasional praise will be enough to keep your child motivated and using the toilet.

Sitting on the toilet

If you haven't done so yet, get the equipment you will need to ensure your child is able to sit on the toilet feeling safe – insert ring, footstool, over-toilet seat or potty chair.

Depending on your child's communications skills you may also need to learn the sign for toilet or get a picture of the toilet. Tip Sheet *Toileting picture steps* has some pictures.

Most children need to practice sitting on the toilet because it is a new routine and a different kind of seat. It has a hole in the middle so they may feel that they are going to fall through even where the hole is too small for their bottom!

The aim is to get your child used to sitting on the toilet and being happy to sit there for up to two minutes. There is no expectation of your child using the toilet at this stage. If they do, 'make a fuss' with the praise you give, so they know you are pleased and to encourage this new behaviour. If nothing happens, praise them for co-operating with sitting on the toilet for example 'Good sitting'.

The tip sheet *The toilet area* gives ideas on ways to make the toilet area an inviting, safe and relaxing place.

Toilet toy to help with sitting

A toilet toy is a good idea to encourage your child to sit and stay on the toilet. Some ideas for the toy are: bubbles, small soft ball, squeeze toy, book or anything that holds your child's interest.

Here's how to use a toilet toy:

- The toy is to encourage your child to stay sitting on the toilet. Your child can only play with it when sitting on the toilet. Store the toy close to the toilet out of reach.
- You may need to sit on the toilet and play with the toy to show the child what to do.
- When your child gets off the toilet put the toy away.
- If your child wants more time to play with the toy they can keep playing if they are sitting. Remember that the rule is: 'no sitting, no toy'.
- Once your child understands that the toy can only be played with when sitting on the toilet you may wish to use the toy to show your child it is toilet time and to follow you to the toilet. At the same time say 'toilet now' or sign toilet.

However, you may not need to use a toilet toy. Your child may be happy with just having your attention – singing a song, talking, reading a story.

Sitting

Gradually increase the number of times and the length of time your child sits on the toilet. Two minutes is the sitting-time goal; five minutes at the absolute maximum!

- Sitting on the toilet needs to become just another part of your child's day. A good time to start sitting your child on the toilet is before their daily shower or bath.
- Once they are sitting without complaint try adding another time – first nappy change of the day is a good one.
- Then increase the sitting to after every nappy change or every meal. You may catch a poo in the toilet but that is not the aim at this stage. If it does occur make sure you make a great fuss when giving praise!
- Check that the toilet toy remains motivating. You may need to change it for something else. Some children have a few toys or books that are rotated every couple of days.

- Gradually increase the time your child is expected to sit. In the beginning it may be a few seconds but over time increase to two minutes.
- It is a good idea to write down how long your child sits for each time. This will help you see the progress your child is making.

Some children will not sit with a bare bottom. Start them sitting with their clothes on; they may also need the lid shut. Gradually move to lid open, pants down, and bare bottom.

Note: Never force your child to sit on the toilet. Do not allow them to be distressed. If they are upset or refuse to sit, stop, walk away and try again later.

Dressing and undressing for toileting

Learning to dress and undress involves several skills. Children with special needs should be encouraged to help undress/dress from an early age.

Here are some tips to help your child learn to pull their pants down and up.

- Use loose, comfortable clothes. Your child might do best with shorts, pyjama pants or track pants with an elastic waist.
- Help your child find the best position for dressing. This might be sitting on the floor or on a small stool. It might be lying on the floor on their back or on their side. Your child might like to stand, lean on the wall or hold onto a rail.
- Give the child lots of time.
- Start with pushing pants down.
- Place your hands over theirs to help them if they need. Fade out your help.
- Use simple words. Always use the same word such as 'Pants down'.
- Do the steps in the same way each time.
- Once your child is able to push down their pants get them to practise pulling up their pants using the same steps.
- Praise when your child tries hard or does well.

Getting help

If your child has limited movement, poor hand skills, poor awareness of body position, poor balance, reduced vision or short attention span speak to your child's occupational therapist. They can assist with special clothing, equipment and more strategies. An occupational therapist can also help you if your child is taking a long time to learn the dressing skills.

Knowing how to use the toilet

In Step 1 we suggested that you start to talk about using the toilet and to have an open door approach when you go to the toilet. Now is a good time to talk more specifically about the toilet. Here are some ideas to help you:

- Encourage your child's brothers/sisters to show how they use the toilet.
- When your child is watching you use the toilet, talk about what you are doing. Show your child your wee or poo in the toilet. Showing your poo can seem embarrassing but it is a powerful learning tool.
- Play 'toilet time' with a soft toy or doll. Talk about the toilet routine.
- Read picture books about going to the toilet. On page 24 is a list of some of the books available.
- Use the series of toileting pictures to talk about going to the toilet. The tip sheet *Toileting picture steps* has a set of pictures and information on how they can be used.
- Make a photo book with pictures of your child using the toilet. The tip sheet *Photo book for a story about toileting* gives directions of how to make and use such a book.

Skills introduced and developed in this step

- Sitting on the toilet.
- Pulling pants down and up.
- Sequence of steps when going to and using the toilet.

Tip sheets:

- Toileting picture steps.
- Photo book for a story about toileting.
- Toilet area.

a child needs to
have a number
of skills...

Step 3 : Raising awareness



Raising awareness about wee and poo.

Nappies are fantastic at keeping children feeling dry. They can absorb large amounts of fluid so your child is not getting the sensation of feeling wet and uncomfortable. In this step you have to make the nappy feel wet so your child becomes aware of when they have done wee. You also need to raise your awareness of your child's bladder and bowel function by keeping a record.

Raising awareness of wet and dry

- Talk about wet and dry when you are changing a wet nappy and putting on a dry nappy and when washing hands and drying hands.
- Put your child into underwear inside the nappy. Your child will be able to feel when they have done wee. Alternatively place folded kitchen paper towel in the nappy to act as a liner (use one that does not fall apart when wet!). Your child will then be able to feel when they have passed wee.
- Encourage your child to tell you when they are wet.

Keeping a record of wee and poo

Keeping a record of wee and poo will help you work out your child's pattern. This pattern will be a guide to help you decide when to take your child to the toilet. The record needs to be kept for about a week for the pattern to emerge. There is a copy of a Wee & poo: daily recording sheet at the back of this booklet and also on the tip sheet disc. Here's a guide to completing the chart.

- Have your child in underwear or place the 'liner' in the nappy. Each hour check to see if the liner is wet or dry. Record this on the chart. Also write down when poo has been passed.

- Have child care/school or other programs your child attends keep the chart too.
- Keep the chart for about a week.
- Look for a pattern. There may not be a clear pattern but you should be able to identify the length of time between wees. This gives you a guide to how often you will need to prompt/take your child to the toilet. A clearer pattern should emerge in relation to bowel movement.

To move to Step 4 your child needs to be passing good amounts of wee rather than just dribbles and needs to go at least 1½ hours between wees. Your child's poo should be soft formed and easily passed. There should be no constipation.

If you have concerns about your child's bladder or bowel function seek advice. Page 22 gives details.

Skill introduced and developed in this step

- Increased awareness of the sensation of passing wee.

Tip sheet

- Wee & poo: daily recording sheet.

awareness

Step 4 : Using the toilet for wee and poo



We are now at the nitty-gritty of toilet training – the expectation of wee and poo happening in the toilet.

The supporting skills have been practiced so your child should be well on the way to:

- co-operating when asked to go to the toilet
- happily sitting on the toilet
- making attempts to pull down and pull up their clothes and underwear.

By now you will have a good idea of how often your child is doing wee and poo so you can begin the training process.

Before you start

Before you move your child into underpants to start the training process you need to have decided on the following:

- A plan for dealing with wee and poo accidents – see below for some suggestions.
- The verbal prompt to be used and, if you require it, the sign or picture prompt. Remember everyone involved should use the same prompt such as 'Toilet now' plus the sign or picture that they will use.

- Whether you are going to use a photo story toilet book or picture sequence, in which case you need to get them ready. The tip sheet *Photo book for a story about toileting* tells you how to make a book for your child. The tip sheet *Toileting picture steps* describes how to use these pictures to prompt your child.
- Rewards – what and how you will use them. See page 13 for more information.
- How you will teach your son to wee on the toilet: sitting v standing. See table below.

You may need to purchase extra underwear as your child may go through several pairs a day when you first start. Talk to everyone involved about when your child moves into underpants – child care, school, family and friends.

Suggestions on how to deal with accidents

Accidents are part of the learning process – we learn by our mistakes. Be careful that you give your child the right response so they can learn. Only reward the behaviour you want, such as indicating the need to go to the toilet, staying dry, using the toilet.

Make up an 'accident pack' containing wipes, underwear and rubbish bag and keep it in or close to the toilet. Collect the pack before taking your child to the toilet so you can complete the clean up with a minimum of fuss and conversation.

Sitting vs standing for boys

Sitting	Standing
Helps keep the training process simple when starting.	No transition from sitting to standing but some boys refuse to sit on the toilet for poo.
Your son is sitting for both wee and poo.	Can be difficult for smaller boys to reach the toilet.
It is easier to get the wee into the toilet and less messy.	Many boys learn to wee standing up without ever being taught.

When your child has an accident, it is important that you stay calm and say merely, 'You've done wee, let's get changed' or 'you've done poo, let's get changed'. Go to the bathroom and help your child clean up. Keep the conversation to the minimum and do not make the clean-up a fun time for your child.

Just for boys: sitting or standing to wee

We recommend that you start with sitting to wee to avoid confusion with poo. Only teach your son to stand once he is reliable with going to the toilet for wee and poo.

Getting started with using the toilet for wee and poo

- Pick a time when you can be around your home for two or three days to focus on the toilet training.
- If this is not possible, be sure to let child care or school know that you have started toilet training and that your child will not be in nappies.
- Remove the nappy. Use nappies only at night.
- Use underwear or cloth trainer pants.
- Use the information you collected on the *Wee & poo: daily recording sheet* to guide how often you will take your child to the toilet.
- In these first few days give your child big drinks to increase the likelihood of them doing wee in the toilet. Wait 10–15 minutes after a big drink then try your child on the toilet. See the tip sheet *Sitting for wee but nothing happens*.
- When you take your child to the toilet remind them of the steps with pictures or words. Assist where necessary.
- When wee or poo is passed into the toilet make a big fuss with praise and rewards to show how pleased you are and to reinforce the skill. Remember to also praise co-operation.

Keeping on track

- After these few days of 'intensive' training you will have established a routine of taking your child to the toilet following drinks and food. This means your child will be sitting on the toilet after breakfast, morning snack, lunch, afternoon snack, dinner or tea, and before bed, in all five or six times each day.

- Keep to the routine both at home and when on outings. Try not put a nappy on your child. If you are going out and are not certain about the toileting facilities put the nappy over the underpants.
- Keep the toilet time focused. Remember it should be fun but not entertaining. You want your child to focus on using the toilet not on how long you are willing to read stories, sing songs or play.
- Keep a record of success in toileting and of 'accidents'. It will help you track the progress your child is making.
- If you are timing toileting, begin to extend the times between sitting your child on the toilet. The aim is for your child to be able to hold between toilet times for around 3–4 hours.
- As your child becomes more reliable with using the toilet fade out the prompting and encourage them to ask or tell you when they need to go to the toilet. This may take several months especially with poo.

Progressing to independence

Teaching your child to use unfamiliar toilets is an essential part of toilet training. Public toilets can be particularly difficult because of the extra noise, lighting and different smell. Here are some suggestions to help your child cope:

- Introduce different toilets as soon as is practical for child during family outings.
- Firstly just show the toilet. Point out the things that are the same as at home – toilet, toilet paper, flush button, hand basin.
- When first introducing unfamiliar toilets, try to locate toilet facilities that are not excessively noisy or busy. Parent rooms or disabled toilet facilities are often quieter.
- Take some familiar items out with you so the toilet is not completely strange. If you use a toilet toy or have a toilet book these items will help your child to feel more 'at home'. You may wish to make a toilet book with different toilets in it.
- Remember to take the toilet insert ring.

Bottom wiping

Wiping the bottom is an important skill for your child to learn. Being able to bottom wipe is essential for good hygiene, health and independence with toileting. Bottom wiping can be a difficult skill to learn. It requires balance, hand skills and sensory awareness. Your child also needs thinking skills, such as remembering to do it, planning, doing the steps in the right order then checking they have completely cleaned their bottom.

Tips to help your child learn to wipe their bottom

- Practice reaching around to the bottom during dressing. To help in developing the right action, loosely tuck a scarf or the belt of a dressing gown as an animal tail into the back of their pants so that they can pull it off. Practice washing different parts of the body, including the bottom, in the bath.
- Moist toilet wipes are an alternative when your child is first learning this skill. Wipes may be more acceptable as your child is familiar with the wiping sensation the wipes provide in nappy changing. Wipes are also easier to handle.
- When your child is sitting on the toilet make sure they are in the best position to be able to reach around to wipe. This may mean sitting on the toilet with a footstool. Your child may prefer to stand, lean on the wall or hold onto a rail when they wipe. Remember that your child needs to be safe and feel safe.
- Make sure your child can reach the paper.
- Choose toilet paper whose texture or smell appeals to your child.
- Place your hand over theirs to learn the task. Fade out your help as they progress.
- Mark the toilet wall with a sticker about 50cms below the toilet paper holder so your child can measure how much to tear off.

- Use the same set of instructions for wiping every time:
 - pull down paper to sticker
 - tear off paper
 - roll/fold into hand
 - reach back to bottom
 - wipe once from front to back
 - check if paper is clean
 - drop paper into toilet

Repeat sequence of steps until paper is clean.

- A set of picture or cue cards giving the order of the steps may help prompt your child get the steps in the right order.

Allow lots of time for your child to practice these steps. Because wiping is a difficult skill to learn you need to get your child to practise as often as possible. Practise is the way we learn especially difficult skills.

Praise them for doing well or trying hard.

If you need extra help, speak to your child's occupational therapist.

Skills introduced and developed in this step

- Using the toilet for wee and poo.
- Bottom wiping after using the toilet.
- Putting together the toileting steps.
- Learning to use unfamiliar toilets.

Tip sheets

- Photo book for a story about toileting.
- Wee & poo: daily recording sheet
- Sitting for wee but nothing happens.
- Wee in the toilet but no poo.
- Not moving forward may be moving backwards.
- Using a pants alarm for toilet training.
- Toileting picture steps

using the toilet...

Step 5 : Night time control



Once they have learned how to go to the toilet during the day some children will quickly become dry overnight. But others take time to learn the skill of staying dry when asleep.

About night time bladder control

To stay dry overnight we need to develop the skill of responding to our bladder when asleep. We either need to wake up to go to the toilet or hold on, a complex interaction between our body and our brain. When we are asleep the body continues to make wee so the bladder is filling and sending messages to the brain about how full it is. The brain must respond by either keeping the bladder holding on or wake us up to go to the toilet. If the brain does not respond to the bladder's messages the bladder empties when it is full. Most of us develop night control without having to do anything special.

Tips for night time control

Wait until your child has reliable day time control before moving on to night time control. It takes at least six months for children to be reliable during the day. A child with special needs is likely to take longer.

Your child may tell you they are ready either by not wanting to wear a nappy or taking it off. Many children will wake up dry but use the nappy because they are wearing it.

- Get a waterproof mattress protector or an absorbent bed pad. See page 22 for further information about these products.
- Let your child know that the nappy will not be put on at night and they are to try to keep their bed dry. If they wake up with a wet bed they are to let you know.

- A social story can be used to help your child understand what they are trying to achieve. See the tip sheet *Photo book for a story on toileting*.
- Don't restrict fluids in the evening but make sure your child is not over-drinking before going to bed. Their last drink should be about an hour before going to bed. If you are in the habit of giving a night bottle you will need to wean your child off it.
- Take your child to the toilet just before they go to bed.
- Remind them they are trying to keep their bed dry until morning or wake up to go to the toilet.
- Leave a night light on.
- Don't wake your child to take them to the toilet during the night as they often have no memory of this in the morning. Waking them doesn't help them learn to wake up to the feeling of needing to do wee.
- Keep a record of what happens each night – dry or wet.
- Use rewards for specific things you want your child to do for example: going to the toilet before bed, helping to strip the bed, putting wet clothes into the laundry. See the section on rewards and praise on page 13 for further ideas and tips.

How long should you keep going?

Try these tips for a couple of weeks. If there are more dry beds than wet, keep going; if there are more wet beds than dry it may be too early for your child. If the bed is wet every night, your child is not ready or may need treatment strategies for true bed wetting.

About bedwetting

Bedwetting, sometimes called nocturnal enuresis, is when a child over five years old is unable to stay dry over night. Treatment is usually offered to children over the age of six. The tip sheet *Bedwetting* gives more information about this issue.

Children with special needs may take longer to gain night time control.

Skills introduced and developed in this step

- Staying dry when asleep.

Tip sheets

- Photo book for a story about toileting.
- Bedwetting.

control during the night...

Success in toilet training

Success with toilet training will be determined by your child's abilities – so it will vary from child to child. Below are some pictures of success; you may be able to identify one or more of them for your child:

- When taken to the toilet does wee or poo in the toilet, there are few accidents.
- Needs some help with the toileting process but can do most of it by themselves. Help may include assistance with clothes, getting on to the toilet.
- Uses visual prompts to move through the steps of toileting, either a book or picture strip on the wall next to the toilet.
- Needs supervision only, can complete the steps independently.
- Can go to the toilet without being prompted to do so.

One Step at a Time is a step-by-step guide aimed at giving you information and confidence in toilet training your child. It can be a long journey and it may take time but each step is progress. We congratulate you on all the efforts you and your child have put into achieving a level of independence with toileting.

Sources of assistance and information

You may need additional help and support with toilet training.

The following pages give suggestions for contacting people and organisations which may be able to assist; provide information on continence products and government schemes; and list some books, DVDs and web sites that could be useful for you and your child.

Health professionals

Consider consulting the health professionals or other people who currently work with or look after your child. These may include:

- child health nurse
- Early Childhood Intervention services
- continence nurse advisor
- paediatrician
- general practitioner
- occupational therapist
- physiotherapist.

For more general information and advice

National Continence Helpline: 1800 33 00 66

Parentline: 1300 30 1300

MyTime

MyTime groups provide support for mothers, fathers, grandparents and anyone caring for a child with a disability or chronic medical condition.

For your local MyTime group go to: www.mytime.net.au

Continence products

Here is an overview of continence products available. Talk with a health professional should your child need to use these products.

Pads – can be disposable or washable (reusable).

They come in a large range of sizes and styles.

Your child may need this type of product if they have outgrown the nappies available in the supermarket or nappies aren't absorbent enough. There will be one that suits their needs.

Pants – can be disposable or washable. The washable ones come in a variety of styles for both boys and girls. The pants can be unpadded, partially padded or fully padded. The unpadded pants have a pouch where a pad can be placed inside. They are sometimes used during toilet training to raise awareness of being wet or soiled.

Bedpads and chairpads – can be disposable or washable. The washable ones can be used alone when you are training your child at night or can be used as a back-up to pants and pads. The chair pads can be used in wheelchairs or car seats; they are particularly useful when your child is on the school bus. The disposable ones are used in the short term such as when you are on holiday or if your child is having a sleepover.

Bedding protection – a range available of waterproof covers for pillows, bedding (doonas or quilts) and mattresses. They come in a variety of sizes and styles.

Government funding schemes

The Commonwealth and the state governments in Australia have schemes and programs that help people with permanent or severe incontinence to meet some of the costs of their continence products.

For more information about continence products and funding schemes contact call the Continence Helpline or Continence Resource Centres listed under general information and advice.

Toilet training story books

There are a large number of books written for children about toilet training. Below is listed a selection only. Many of these books will be available in your local library.

- *Zoo Poo: A First Toilet Training Book* (2004) Richard Morgan: Barons Educational Series.
- *Liam Does Poo in the Toilet: A Story about trouble with toilet Training* (2008) Jane Whelen: Banks Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- *Big Girls Use the Potty* (2008) Andrea Pinnington: DK Publishing.
- *The Potty Books for Boys* (2007) Alyssa Satin: Capucilli Barron's Educational Series Inc US.
- *Nappy Duck and Potty Piggy* (2007) Bernadette Ford: Boxer Books Limited.
- *It's Potty Time for Boys: Potty Training Made Easy!* (2008) Chris Sharp: Smart Kid's Publishing.
- *Run Think Go!* (2007) Scott Winters: Author House Publishing.
- *Even Fire Fighters Go To The Potty* (2008) Wendy Wax & Naomi Wax: Little Simon Publishing.
- *On Your Potty Little Rabbit* (2008) Kathleen Amant: Clavis Publishing.
- *Anna on the Big Toilet* (2008) Kathleen Amant: Walker books
- *I Have to Go* (1988) Robert Munsch: Annick Press

DVDs

Several DVDs are available on toilet training, however only one is for children with special needs – Tommy's Toilet Triumph. This is in cartoon format and is available to purchase from: www.shop.service.sa.gov.au

The following DVDs may be available in your local library but can be purchased from sellers online or shops:

- *Go Potty Go: Potty training for tiny toddlers*
- *Potty Power for Boys and Girls*
- *Sesame Street: Elmo's Potty Time*
- *The Potty Movie for Girl*
- *The Potty Movie for Boys*
- *Bear in the Big Blue House – Potty Time with Bear*

Web sites

There is a great deal of information on toilet training online. The selected sites below provide clear information about toilet training children with special needs.

- PromoCon is a UK-based organisation. Their web site has a number of useful downloadable resources for families and health care professionals: www.promocon.co.uk
- Autism Consultation and Training ACT-NOW: www.med.monash.edu.au/spppm/research/devpsych/actnow
- Novita Children Services: www.novita.org.au
- Raising Children Australia: www.raisingchildren.net.au
- National Autistic Society UK Tip Sheet on Toilet Training: www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=2427&a=3366

information and assistance

Date _____

Please place a ✓ in the appropriate column every time you check your child's pants or whenever they have an accident.

[illegible]

THE BRISTOL STOOL FORM SCALE (for children)

Choose your Poo!

type 1		looks like: rabbit droppings Separate hard lumps, like nuts (hard to pass)
type 2		looks like: bunch of grapes Sausage-shaped but lumpy
type 3		looks like: corn on the cob Like a sausage, but with cracks on the surface
type 4		looks like: sausage Like a sausage or snake, smooth and soft
type 5		looks like: chicken nuggets Soft blobs with clear-cut edges (passed easily)
type 6		looks like: porridge Soft blobs with clear-cut edges (passed easily)
type 7		looks like: gravy Watery, no solid pieces ENTIRELY LIQUID

The concept by Professor DCA Candy and Emma Davey, based on the Bristol Stool Form Scale produced by Dr KW Heaton, Reader in Medicine at the University of Bristol. © 2005 Norgine Limited manufacturer of MOVICOL®-Half



Tip sheet: Bedwetting

Bedwetting, sometimes called nocturnal enuresis, is when a child who is over five years old is still wet at night.

It is a common problem: about twenty per cent of five-year-olds and ten per cent of seven-year-olds still wet the bed. The condition is more common in boys than in girls and tends to run in families.

Bedwetting can cause a lot of distress for the child and family. There are specialist clinics and services that treat bedwetting so talk to your doctor if, after using simple strategies, bedwetting continues to be a problem. Treatment is usually offered for children six years or older. Seek help when your child has had good day-time control for at least ten months and is over six years old, or if you are worried.

Why a child may wet the bed

There are a number of reasons why a child may wet the bed. Here are some of the common ones:

- They are unable to wake up quickly enough. When the child is asleep the brain is unable to recognise the need to do wee.
- They have an overactive bladder, which can result in small, frequent wees during the day and night.
- They have reduced production of a hormone released from the brain that concentrates wee overnight, resulting in a large amount of wee being produced overnight.

Treatments and approaches

Establishing healthy bladder and bowel habits

Eating well – encourage your child to eat a wide variety of foods especially fruit and vegetables and wholemeal breads and cereal products. These foods help prevent constipation, and provide essential nutrients. Prevention of constipation is important as it can make bedwetting worse. The tip sheet *Constipation* covers this issue in more detail.

Drinking well – encourage your child to drink six water-based drinks spread evenly throughout the day. Do not restrict fluids but make sure your child is not drinking extra drinks in the evening before bed. Fluid is also important for a healthy bowel by helping to keep the poo soft and easy to pass.

See the tip sheet *Food, Fluids and Fun!*

Keep a record to check how much your child is drinking and the amounts of wee they pass. This will be useful information when you take your child for treatment. Use a large ice-cream container in the toilet to catch the wee then tip it into a measuring jug – an old one or buy a cheap one for the purpose. Get your child involved in the measuring of the wee and the drinks.

Below is a suggestion for how to draw up the record. Keep it for two days' recording every drink and every wee.

Time	Drink: amount and type	Wee amount
8 am		180mL
8.30 am	150mL milk + 100mL orange juice	
11.00 am		150mL

Here is a guide to how much wee a child should pass each time they go to the toilet.

Child's age	Amount of wee each time they go to the toilet
4 years	150mL
5 years	180mL
6 years	210mL
7 years	240mL
8 years	250mL plus

Bedwetting alarms

Bedwetting alarms are used to help children become dry at night. Your child needs to be over six years old for this treatment.

The alarm works by helping your child to learn to wake up to go to the toilet or to hold on to wee when asleep. The alarm is set off when your child starts to do wee. It is important that the child wakes up with the alarm sounding. You may have to wake your child when first using the alarm. Once the child is awake they get up and go to the toilet to finish off the wee.

By using the alarm over a period of time your child learns to wake up quickly to the feeling of a full bladder. They can get up and go to the toilet or continue to sleep but hold on to wee, keeping their bed dry.

We recommend that when an alarm is used you are supported by a specialist clinic or service. Call the National Continence Helpline 1800 330066 to find out the services in your area.

There are two types of bedwetting alarms, a pants alarm and a bell and pad alarm.

Pants alarm – this is a body-worn alarm. A sensor plate is placed between two pairs of underwear and connected to a small alarm box. The alarm box is attached to the child's clothes near the shoulder. When the child passes wee the alarm is set off.

Bell and pad alarm – this alarm has a sensor mat and an alarm box. The sensor pad and the alarm are connected by leads or a wireless connection. The sensor mat is placed on the bed covered by a thin sheet or pillow case. The alarm box is positioned near the head of the bed but out of reach so the child has to get out of bed to turn it off.

This alarm has remote sensor and vibrating disc attachments that are sometimes used for children with special needs, especially those who are sensitive to noise or need help to get out of bed to turn off the alarm.

Alarms can be very successful in helping children with and without special needs with bedwetting problems.

Medications

Medications may be used but they are not the first line of treatment. They are usually prescribed if an alarm has not worked. There are two main types of medicines prescribed for bedwetting: one reduces the amount of wee produced overnight and the other helps the bladder hold large amounts of wee.



Tip sheet: Constipation

Constipation is a common childhood problem.

The condition can refer to any of the following:

- less than three poos per week
- large poo – really wide or extremely long
- hard poo – rabbit droppings or large dried poo
- difficult to pass (gets stuck)
- pain when doing a poo – your child may make a straining sound or pull faces
- lots of little bits of poo over the day and may have a more offensive smell.

A child who is constipated may have poor appetite and may complain of tummy pains. Some children avoid doing poo by clenching their bottom and standing on tip toes.

If your child has any of these symptoms see your doctor. Constipation, if left untreated, can overstretch the bowel, making the constipation worse. For some children this can lead to losing the feeling of needing to go to the toilet for poo. As a result they may soil their underwear as poo leaks out from the overstretched bowel.

The passage of large or hardened poo can cause tears in and around your child's bottom. These tears may bleed and cause pain or discomfort. Some children try to hold on to poo to avoid the pain of passing large or hardened poo; this can make the constipation worse. We recommend you see your doctor for advice on the management of the constipation and tears.

Causes of constipation

The cause of constipation is not always clear but may be due to one or more of the following:

- holding off doing a 'poo' when they feel the need because:
 - too distracted by playing
 - fear of the toilet
 - fear of the poo hurting
 - sensory issues
 - toilet room cold and uninviting
- does not like the feeling when passing poo
- not sitting on the toilet long enough to completely empty the bowel

- not drinking enough
- a diet low in fruit and vegetables
- limited mobility
- low muscle tone
- poor body awareness
- the aftermath of an acute illness
- the effect of medications
- change of routine (diet, no accessible toilet, toilet training).

What to do

See your doctor for advice on treatment of constipation. The doctor may prescribe a laxative to help empty the bowel and to help with establishing a regular poo pattern. Do not use laxatives without advice from your doctor.

Keep a record of how often your child does a poo and what it looks like before you see the doctor. You can use a calendar or diary or you may wish to use the *Wee & poo: daily recording sheet* on page 24 of the booklet. The *Bristol stool chart for children* on page 25 will help you with the description. Take the record with you as this will help in deciding on the treatment.

Diet and fluids

- Diet alone is unlikely to be able to treat constipation but is essential in maintaining good bowel habits. A varied diet should be encouraged – fruit and vegetables should be apart of the daily intake.
- Appetite usually picks up once your child has a regular routine for passing poo. Start reintroducing foods so your child is eating a varied diet.
- If fibre is being increased, fluids need to be increased too. Fibre without enough fluid can worsen constipation and soiling.
- If your child is very constipated increasing fibre may make the soiling worse because it will increase the amount of poo in an already overloaded system.
- Have drinks spaced regularly over the day.
- Large amounts of milk can contribute to constipation and lowered appetite.

The tip sheet *Food, fluids and fun!* gives more information on diet and fluids.

Toileting routine

- Your child needs to feel safe and relaxed when using the toilet. The tip sheet *The toilet area* gives more information.
- Correct sitting posture and technique to help your child pass poo. See the tip sheet *The toilet position*.
- Establish a sitting routine on the toilet at the same time each day. The best time is about twenty minutes after breakfast or the main meal of the day. Try this for a week. Introduce a second 'sit' if there is no poo the first time.
- A sitting routine should be for no longer than five minutes, three times a day.
- NEVER force your child to sit on the toilet. If sitting is a problem start with a short period of time and then slowly extend the time. Page 13 in the booklet gives more information about a sitting program.

Remember to reward your child for their co-operation and when poo is passed into the toilet.

The tip sheet *Won't sit to poo* gives more ideas on establishing toileting routines. Information about rewards can be found on page 13 of the booklet.



Tip sheet: Food, Fluids and Fun!

Eating and drinking well for successful toilet training

Successful toilet training is more likely when your child enjoys a healthy diet and is as physically active as possible. Parents and carers can set an example by eating a variety of nutritious family foods, drinking water regularly and joining their children in active play and other activities.

Look for ways to create a happy, child-friendly eating environment with few distractions. If your child needs assistance with eating or drinking, ask for help from your child's therapists. You may need to talk to a speech pathologist and/or dietician, physiotherapist, or occupational therapist.

Fluids – remember WATER!

Water is important for every system in the body. For example, it is needed to control body temperature (by perspiration), to digest and absorb food, and to help in getting rid of waste (poo and wee). Because water is continually lost from our bodies we need to drink fluids regularly. For both bladder and bowel to work well, the most important dietary factor is regular fluid intake.

Water is the most effective drink, whether tap water or fizzy water (plain mineral water or soda water). Drinks such as cordial, fruit juice, soft drink and 'energy' drinks are not helpful due to their high sugar content. It is best to avoid or limit these drinks, especially for young children.

Although milk is a fluid, it should not be relied on as a main source of water. It is a good idea to avoid too much milk and milk products – more than 500–600ml (about two cups) of milk or its equivalent each day will usually fill up small tummies and limit appetite.

Suggestions for encouraging your child to drink water:

- Drink water with or in front of your child so they see you enjoying it.
- Some children prefer chilled water; others like it warmed.
- Add a squeeze or slice of orange or lemon.
- Keep a jug or bottle of water filled for the children who can help themselves.
- If you do offer fruit juice, limit it to once a day and add a little water to it as if it were cordial: one part juice mixed with at least five parts water. Fizzy water may be more interesting than tap water.

- Buy a novelty type of water bottle for your child and leave it lying around; have one for yourself too. Take them with you when you go out.
- Add different-shaped ice cubes or ice cubes with fruit frozen inside.
- If you do use cordial, use a sugar-free or diet cordial made up to a very weak concentration. Diet products contain sweeteners such as sorbitol which can irritate the bowel and cause diarrhoea when taken often or in large amounts.
- You could try adding a dash of food colouring to make water look like cordial.

Children who have good daily water intake will produce good amounts of wee and their poo will be soft so they are less likely to become constipated. Constipation not only affects the passing of poo but can lead to tummy discomfort and loss of appetite (see the tip sheet *Constipation*).

Family foods

Your child will be well nourished if a variety of foods is offered through a balanced family diet which includes foods from all four food groups and includes enough fibre and water. The four food groups are: breads and cereals; fruit and vegetables; milk and milk products; protein foods including meat, fish, poultry, eggs, and legumes such as beans and peas and nuts.

As a parents or carer you have the responsibility to buy, store and prepare a variety of nutritious foods for your child. You should offer them regular small meals or snacks from all the food groups. It is your child's responsibility to decide whether and how much to eat.

Fibre is the part of plant foods which the human digestive system cannot break down; it passes through the bowel almost unchanged, depending on the type. Fibre is present in different forms in food. Cereal products are rich in one type while fruit and vegetables are usually rich in a different type of fibre. It is important to eat some of each every day.

Wholemeal cereal or grain products contain bran which absorbs water to increase the bulk and softness of the poo and helps the poo move through the bowel. Remember, unprocessed bran is NOT recommended for young children.

Aim to offer different breads and cereal products every day, and choose wholemeal where possible. The following are examples of cereal and grain products your child may enjoy:

- sliced bread, bread rolls
- bagels
- pita bread, chapatti
- toasted crumpets, muffins
- scones, pikelets
- porridge oats, ready-to-eat breakfast cereals, muesli products
- crackers, crispbreads, breadsticks (grissini)
- pasta, rice.

Fruit and vegetables contain many nutrients as well as fibre. They are usually a good source of water, which may make up about 70–95% of the fruit or vegetable, depending on the variety and method of preparation (raw, cooked, canned).

Children may be encouraged to eat small servings throughout the day as part of their meals and snacks. The following are some suggestions for making fruit and vegetables attractive to children.

- Almost any fruit or vegetable may be eaten raw if the child has the skills to do so. Raw vegetables will usually have a more pleasant, sweeter taste than the familiar cooked taste which may be less liked by younger members of the family.
- Raw or cooked versions may be made safe for younger or less able children by grating or blending.
- Serve salad vegetables on a plate rather than mixed together in a bowl.
- Make soups such as pumpkin, chicken and sweet corn, lentil. Use a blender to grind the vegetables if your child prefers smooth soups.
- Share a plate of cut-up fruit or vegetables; served with a simple dip such as yoghurt or cream cheese.
- Make fruit kebabs threaded on icy pole sticks.
- Offer dried fruit such as sultanas, apricot, peaches, pears, pawpaw, banana.
- Blend fruit with milk and/or yoghurt to make fruit smoothies.
- Make vegetable patties.
- Try adding mashed banana, stewed or grated apple, berries, or dried fruit to home-made muffins.
- Serve vegetables with cheese sauce or topped with grated cheese.
- Include grated or small pieces of vegetable in casseroles, hamburger, pasta sauce, meatloaf.

Nuts and nut products are nutritious foods which contain good amounts of fibre. If tolerated, they may be eaten by older children – plain, chopped or as ground nutmeal (almond, walnut) added to cereal, salad, fruit or yoghurt or as spreads/butters on bread and crackers, or as dips.

Note: Processed fruit products such as fruit sticks, fruit bars, fruit leathers or roll ups are generally not suitable choices for fruit because they contain high amounts of sugars. These foods are dried so do not provide any fluid.

Remember – do not give whole or chopped nuts to young children as they can easily be inhaled, causing choking.

Activity

Regular physical activity is an important factor for everyone in keeping their bowels healthy. Even gentle exercise, to your child's level of ability, can be helpful in stimulating the abdominal muscles and the bowel. If your child is not walking or needs assistance to move, you can ask a physiotherapist for suggested activities, especially those you can do as a family.

Further information about healthy diet for children and families

- www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au
- www.raisingchildren.net.au
- www.healthyactive.gov.au
- www.freshforkids.com.au
- www.marketfresh.com.au

Information about physical activity for children and families:

- www.sportrec.qld.gov.au/Getactive.aspx
- www.healthyactive.gov.au/internet/healthyactive/publishing.nsf/Content/publications-1
- information fact sheets about the digestive system and how it works: www.gesa.org.au/



Tip sheet:

Goal setting to help your child learn

To help your child learn new skills you need to be clear as to what you want your child to be able to do.

The goal you and your child are working towards is being able to use the toilet without help. The booklet outlines five steps, each of which is a goal for your child to achieve that will move them closer to the end goal: *being able to use the toilet without help*. This tip sheet gives information on how to set goals for each skill you will teach your child.

What is a goal?

A goal is the action or behaviour you want your child to do. For example:

- My child will let me know they need to go to the toilet by using the word 'toilet', picture or sign.
- My child will be able to pull up their underwear.
- My child will be able to sit on the toilet for thirty seconds.

How to use the goal

Now list the actions that will help your child learn the behaviour you want. For example:

Goal – My child will let me know they need to go to the toilet by using the word 'toilet', picture or sign.

Actions

- Each time I take my child to the toilet I will say the word 'toilet' (or the person taking my child to the toilet will say this).
- I will ask my child to say the word 'toilet' or use the picture/sign for 'toilet' when I point to the toilet.
- I will point out the toilet in a story book when reading with my child.

Reward your child when they do the action you are teaching and ignore any negative behaviour. For example: When my child uses the word 'toilet' correctly the reward will be: 'Well done, that's the toilet!' See page 13 in the booklet for more information about rewards.

Writing a plan

Writing a plan is a good idea especially when there are others involved in teaching your child the new skill. The plan should include the goal and the actions to be used to teach the behaviour in the goal. It doesn't need to be anything too complicated; you may choose to just jot down the points. Over the page is a more formal kind of plan that you can fill in if you wish. Whatever you use will help your child learn as everyone will be clear on what is being taught, how it is being taught and the rewards that are to be used. A written plan will give certainty to your child and help prevent confusion.

The purpose of the plan is to make sure that everyone involved in helping your child with developing toilet skills has a consistent approach.

Toileting skills plan



Child's name

Date

Goal

Reward

Learning actions

The purpose of the plan is to make sure that everyone involved in helping your child with developing toilet skills has a consistent approach.



Tip sheet: Not moving forward may be moving backwards

Your child has been making real progress with toilet training when suddenly it all stops! Instead of moving forward they are going backwards.

The child who may have been having few accidents is now wet all the time. Frustrating and puzzling as this backward step is, it is a common occurrence, known as regression.

Let's look at some of the reasons for regression and how you can get your child back on track with toileting.

Some reasons for regression

- Rewards and praise for keeping dry and clean may have been removed too quickly.
- Accidents with wee and poo are getting a lot of attention. Your child repeats this behaviour because it gets your attention.
- Change in the family routine – a new baby, moving house, going on holiday, change in child care arrangements or starting school can throw your child out of the good routines you have established.
- An episode of constipation resulting in passing a painful poo can make your child refuse to use the toilet.
- The child has had an illness or infection, especially a urinary tract infection.
- Having a 'bad' experience in the toilet is causing your child to become fearful of using the toilet.
- There has been a change in diet or medications.

How to get back on track

- Keep calm. Calmly say, 'You've done wee (or a poo). Come on, let's get changed.' Go to the bathroom and help your child clean up. Keep the conversation to the minimum and do not make the clean-up fun time for your child.
- Check your child's health. If you think your child may have an infection or constipation see your doctor early to have the problem treated.
- If your family routine has changed slow down your toilet training expectations. As a result of the change, you may not be giving your child the amount of attention they need.
- Re-establish the daily routine of taking your child to the toilet at regular times such as following meals, daytime sleep, and before bath time.
- Take your child to the toilet before a long play because play is too enjoyable to stop to go to the toilet.
- Use the *Wee & poo: daily recording sheet* on page 24 of the booklet for a week to track when accidents with wee or poo happen. Recording will also help you identify how many accidents are happening.
- Restart the toileting routine. Use praise and rewards to get your child interested in getting back on track. Remember to give them immediately otherwise the reward loses its power to encourage the behaviour you are rewarding. If the reward is not given immediately the child may be confused about what they did to earn the reward.
- Gradually fade out the reward and praise, but don't stop giving them too quickly as your child may go backwards again.
- Keep a daily record of the number of accidents with wee or poo to chart the progress your child is making.



Tip sheet: Using a pants alarm for toilet training

A pants alarm is worn during the day to help a child learn the feeling of needing to do a wee. They are often used as part of an intensive toilet training program.

What is a pants alarm?

A pants alarm is also called a personally-worn alarm. It is a small device used to detect when a child does a wee. A moisture-detecting sensor is attached to a pad in the child's underpants and a small alarm box is pinned to the outside of child's clothing – usually between the shoulder blades or at the back of the waist.

A pants alarm is worn during the day as part of an intensive toilet training program. We strongly recommend that if you are going to use a pants alarm you are supervised by a health professional who has been trained in their use for toilet training.

What is a pants alarm used for?

The purpose of the alarm is to alert both the child and the parent that the child has begun to pass wee. The child is then immediately taken to the toilet so that they get practice in toileting. Another advantage is that the child is more likely to do wee in the toilet during these practice trials. A pants alarm is only used for wee, not for poo.

Why use a pants alarm?

Pants alarms are useful when the child is not aware that their bladder is full and does not realise they are doing wee. When the alarm makes a sound this alerts the child to the fact that they are doing a wee. The child then learns to connect the feeling of a full bladder with the need to go to the toilet.

A program with a pants alarm is a first step towards independent toileting because it prompts the child to go and use the toilet for wee when their bladder is full.

Sometimes it is difficult for parents to detect the exact time wee is passed. A further advantage of the pants alarm is that it alerts parents to the fact that the child is doing wee. A pants alarm can also be a very useful device when assessing a child's readiness for toilet training, as it reveals how long a child can hold on to urine. The pants alarm can

be inserted into a disposable nappy, helping parents know more precisely the length of time between each wee.

How is a pants alarm used?

The pants alarm is worn during the day at times when the child can be closely monitored and can get quickly to a toilet or potty. It is worn outdoors only when an adult can continuously supervise the child and take them to the toilet as soon as the alarm sounds. In this instance the toilet should be nearby and easily accessible.

This alarm should only be worn in places where the child's privacy is assured. It is well suited to a toilet training program at home; pants alarms have also been used in toilet training programs in other settings, for example, child care, pre-school or a specialist school. The main consideration in these situations is how the pants alarm can be used without drawing attention to the child or disturbing other children.

What to do when the pants alarm sounds

The sound of the alarm will startle the child to stop doing wee. You must then do the following:

- Immediately say your child's name and say 'toilet' firmly. Quickly disconnect the alarm if the sound is distracting for your child.
- Take your child to the toilet straight away.
- When your child is seated on the toilet disconnect the alarm if haven't already done so.
- In the beginning you may find that by the time you have reached the toilet your child has already finished doing wee. But it is still important to sit them on the toilet even if there is no wee left to do in the toilet.
- When your child has finished doing wee, put on dry pants and reconnect the alarm.
- When your child is standing away from the toilet and pants are up praise them for using the toilet and give them a reward such as a cuddle or read a story together or do another activity that the child enjoys. See page 13 in the booklet for more information about rewards.
- If your child does not do wee or a poo, let them sit on the toilet for a brief period (no longer than five minutes).
- At the end of this sitting period, if your child does not do a wee or poo, say nothing. Lead your the child back to their previous activity.

Signs of progress will include:

- your child becoming more aware of doing wee.
- your child over time is able to stop doing wee at the first few rings of the alarm and is able to hold on until the toilet is reached.
- your child eventually making the connection between a full bladder feeling and the need to go to the toilet. They will then start to tell you they need to go to the toilet with a word, sign or picture.

Teaching your child what the pants alarm is for

It is always a good idea to teach your child what is going to happen to them before it happens. This can be achieved by a 'role-play' with a favourite large doll or teddy bear. Put the pants alarm on the doll and secretly set off the alarm. Then follow the steps for toileting practice. It is important to make this 'role-play' as realistic as possible, for example, use yellow food dye to colour the water in the toilet for pretend wee. This activity can be repeated at the start of each day.

Another way of teaching your child about the pants alarm is to write a story by creating a photo book with simple sentences describing your child using the pants alarm. See the tip sheet *Photo book for a story on toileting*.



Tip sheet: Photo book for a story about toileting

It is easy to create your own realistic story books to help your child when they are learning new skills.

In this case the idea is to take photos of the child engaged in the toileting steps. Underneath the photos put words about what is happening in the photos. The story can then be read to your child.

Privacy

When taking photographs of your child it is important to ensure that their privacy is protected by these measures:

- Take the photos in such a way that nothing is visible below the waist. This can be achieved by placing a towel over your child's lap, or pulling their tee shirt or dress over their knees when they are seated on the toilet.
- Identify who will have access to this photo book and where it will be stored when it is not being read to your child. It should not be left with your child's toys and other books but should be stored in a secure location or with other books. It is a good idea to write on the inside cover who can use the book and where it is to be kept when not being used.
- Use photo printer facilities in large department stores and specialist photo shops if you don't have a printer at home. You can print off your own photographs without others seeing the photos. This further protects your child's privacy.

Home version of photo book

On the following page is a list of photos and the words that could go in the child's book, depending on the steps you have chosen for the toilet training program. The words are only suggestions. It is important to use the words you would normally use with the child.

You do not have to take all of the photos at the same time. Some can be taken when the child is engaged in activities other than toileting, for example, washing and drying hands and playing with toys.

How to use the book

Read the book with your child before taking your child to the toilet. Give your child the book to read when sitting on the toilet.

Other ways to use the picture set

Instead of putting the pictures in a book you could use them as prompt cards you stick on the wall next to the toilet.

Use only the photos showing the skill you are working on. For example, to show sitting on the toilet:

- Photo 1: Walking to the toilet
- Photo 2: Pulling down pants
- Photo 3: Sitting on the toilet
- Photo 4: Pulling pants up.

Photo book suggestions

Photo	Ideas for the words to use
Child engaged in an activity	(Child's name) is playing with his toys
Child communicating need to go to the toilet	He is telling mum/dad that he needs to go to the toilet
Child and parent walking in direction of toilet	Mum/dad going with (child's name) to the toilet
Child standing in front of the toilet with thumbs inside waistband (to indicate pulling down clothes)	(Child's name) is pulling his pants down
Child seated on toilet	(Child's name) sits on the toilet
Pretend poo and wee in the toilet bowl (use brown playdough and yellow food dye to colour some water)	Look (child's name) has done a wee and a poo in the toilet. (Insert here praise statement, e.g. 'That's fantastic!')
Child or adult hand holding a wad of (clean) toilet paper	(Child's name) is going to wipe his bottom clean now
Child standing from toilet with clothes pulled up, thumbs inside waistband (to indicate pulling up clothing)	(Child's name) gets up from the toilet and pulls his pants up
Child flushing toilet	(Child's name) flushes the toilet
Child washing hands	And washes hands
Child drying hands	Now s/he dries them
Child receives reward for using the toilet	Everyone is very pleased. Mum/dad give (child's name) a reward
Child returning to activities	(Child's name) goes back to playing with his toys



Tip sheet:

Sitting for wee but nothing happens

Your child may be happy to sit on the toilet but does not wee into the toilet. Soon after getting off the toilet they may wet their pants.

There are several reasons why this may happen. Your child:

- has toilet times that don't match their pattern
- has an inconsistent toileting routine
- may not understand the feeling of needing to do wee
- may have poor understanding of what they are meant to do on the toilet
- may be anxious or fearful about sitting on the toilet.

What you can try

- Keep a toileting record to identify your child's pattern then adjust the toilet times to match these times. You may wish to use the *Wee & poo: daily recording sheet* on page 24 of the booklet.
- Plan toilet times after meals, sleep or exercise.
- Give your child a big drink 10–15 minutes before toilet time to increase the likelihood of your child doing wee. This will also help your child learn the feeling of 'fullness'.
- Establish a regular toileting routine and times so your child has several opportunities each day to practise and learn what is expected.
- Make a photo book with photos of your child following the steps of the toileting routine. The tip sheet *Photo book for a story about toileting* explains how to make the book. Alternatively you may wish to use a storybook or DVD about toileting. Several suggested titles are listed at the end of the booklet.
- A pants alarm is another option you may wish to try. The alarm helps your child learn the feeling of needing to do wee. The tip sheet *Using a pants alarm for toilet training* gives information about the alarm and how to use it.
- To help your child 'let go', try pouring water from one jug to another, have your child blow bubbles, or play the sound of running water

- Think about whether the toilet area is calm and relaxing; music or a toilet toy can help here. Also consider possible sensory issues related to smell, noise, light or touch. The tip sheet *The toilet area* gives suggestions on how to make the toilet area feel welcoming and pleasant for a child.
- Make sure your child feels safe on the toilet and is able to sit in the correct toilet position. The correct toilet position is particularly important for doing poo. The tip sheet *The toilet position* gives the details.
- Make sure your child is interested in the reward they are being given.
- Make sure that you are calm and give only limited attention when you are cleaning up an accident and changing your child into clean clothes.
- Having used these suggestions, if there is no progress you may need to take a break from toilet training. But it is important to keep to consistent routines to help your child maintain skills they have learnt and for them to practise dressing and undressing.
- Before you start toilet training again it is a good idea to re-do the *Toileting skills check list* on page 9 and to keep the *Wee & poo: daily recording sheet* on page 24 of the booklet.



Tip sheet: The toilet area

The toilet area needs to be an inviting place where your child feels safe and relaxed, and is happy to go.

If you have more than one toilet, use only one; this should be the toilet closest to where your child spends most of their time or the one they prefer. Using the same toilet at home each time will help your child know what to expect in the toilet so they can focus on the steps of toileting. Set this toilet up with the equipment needed such as foot stool or toilet seat insert.

Some suggestions for the toilet area

The toilet area needs to suit your child's physical, emotional and sensory needs. The following suggestions may give you some ideas for achieving this.

Making the area inviting

- Decorate the walls with posters, wall charts or a sticker chart with your child's photo. Photos or pictures showing the toileting routine can be placed on the wall or back of the door. A three-picture or photo sequence showing 'sit on the toilet', 'wee or poo in the toilet' and reward can help to remind your child of the toileting routine.
- Use soft lighting or a coloured light shade if your child is sensitive to glare.
- Place a lucky-dip bag on the door handle which contains small toys or book.
- Create coloured water in the toilet with food colouring.
- Ensure the toilet area is warm.
- Have an open-door policy so your child sees other family members use the toilet as part of normal routine.
- If the fan and light are on the one switch and your child is sensitive to the noise of the fan, you may need to use a small portable light

Making the area safe

- Stay nearby when your child is sitting on the toilet.
- Use suitable equipment for your child's needs. Such items can include: a toilet seat insert to make the hole smaller; a 'toilet throne' which gives lots of support; a footstool which helps them balance; a musical potty which gives a 'fun' reward; and a padded toilet seat for comfort and which may help the child feel safer.

- Act out toileting with the child's doll or teddy.
- Place a favourite toy or teddy or doll on a toy potty in the room.
- Talk or sing or play games with your child.
- Read a book about toileting to your child.

Making the area relaxing

- Play music which makes them relax or feel happy.
- Place a warm, colourful mat on the floor.
- Blow bubbles together while your child sits and relaxes.
- Choose toilet paper which is soft, has pictures, or is coloured.
- Use soap, room sprays/deodorisers or disinfectants that your child finds pleasant smelling. Unperfumed products are useful for children who do not tolerate perfume or strong smells. Be aware that some cleaning products can be very strong smelling and may put your child off wanting to go into the toilet area.
- Use clothing which is easy to pull up and down.

Specialised equipment

For specialised equipment such as rails or modified seats talk to your child's occupational therapist or physiotherapist.

Sensory issues

Some children may be distressed by sensory factors – sight, sound, smell, touch or temperature – resulting in their refusal to enter the toilet. Possible reasons children may refuse to enter the toilet area or refuse to sit on the toilet include:

- noise – toilet flush, fan, echo or hand dryers
- glare from bright lights
- touch – cold seat, toilet paper, pulling pants down
- smell of soaps, room sprays, deodoriser or disinfectants.

Talk to your child's occupational therapist for more ideas if sensory issues cause your child distress when taken to the toilet and the ideas in this tip sheet have not helped.



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Tip sheet: Toilet position

Sitting on the toilet in the right position is important to make sure your child empties out all their wee and poo.

- Your child's bottom should be touching the back part of the toilet seat.
- Feet should be flat on the foot stool and not hanging down in mid-air as your child may find it more difficult to do poo.
- The step height will depend on your child and your toilet.
- Make sure your child's feet and legs are apart when they are sitting.
- Have your child lean forward with a straight back. This means they bend from the hips
- When your child is passing wee or poo get them to push out their tummy above the belly button like a balloon. This allows the bottom to open and the poo to come out.
- If it doesn't work the first time have a rest and try again.
- Make sure your child is safe and feels safe – see the tip sheet *The toilet area*. If your child has balance or other physical problems talk your occupational therapist or physiotherapist.





Tip sheet: Won't sit for poo

Your child may be happy to sit on the toilet to do wee but refuse point blank to sit to do poo.

They may ask for a nappy, or hold on for days if the nappy is not given; do poo in their pants; or wait until they are in their night nappy to poo. Parents often find these situations difficult to deal with and feel their child is never going to get out of nappies.

Be reassured that issues with poo are common. Here are some ideas you can try to help your child move to doing poo in the toilet.

Why this may be happening for your child

There are several reasons why your child may not be doing poo in the toilet. The child may:

- have poor understanding of what they are meant to do on the toilet.
- be anxious or fearful about sitting on the toilet.
- fear 'letting go' of poo. This can be a very real fear for children. It is not well understood but seems to have a lot to do with poo being solid and the child seeing it as part of themselves being flushed down the toilet. Let your child know you can see they are frightened but help them to understand that the poo is 'happy' to go into the toilet: it's only rubbish the body is getting rid of.
- have learnt to poo standing and do not want or know how to poo on the toilet.
- be constipated or have difficulty in passing poo.
- not like the smell of their poo.

If your child is constipated see your doctor to get treatment before you try the next suggest.

Saying bye bye to the poo nappy

Moving your child from a nappy for poo to using the toilet often needs a set plan. Here are the nappy rules:

- Your child is allowed to have a nappy put on for poo but the nappies need to be kept in the bathroom.
- Take your child to the toilet or bathroom for the nappy to be put on.
- Start by setting limits about where your child can go to use the nappy for poo. For example, their bedroom is OK but best is near the toilet. They are not allowed to go into the lounge, kitchen, dining room, family room or outside.

- Gradually limit the nappy area to the toilet/bathroom. Your child remains there until they have done poo. You can leave your child with a toy or a book.
- Remove the nappy after they have done poo and get your child to help clean up – as much as they are able. If you need to do most of the cleaning and changing of clothes do not make this a fun time. Talk only as necessary.
- Have them empty the poo into the toilet because that's where poo goes! Your child can then flush the toilet and wash and dry their hands.
- Have your child stand to put on and take off the nappy so they can take an active part in the process. Also your child can't wipe their bottom when lying down.

Once your child is sitting on the toilet with a nappy on and doing poo, the following ideas can be used to remove the nappy:

- Place the nappy under the toilet seat so the child can still feel it. Then over a period of time the nappy is lowered so it is not touching their bottom and eventually removed altogether. You may be able to replace the nappy with toilet paper.
- Use increasingly smaller sized nappies until eventually the child is told that there are no longer any nappies that fit them. Tell them that they will have to start doing poo on the toilet without the nappy as they are now a 'big' boy/girl.
- Put the nappy on without fastening. The nappy is eventually replaced by paper towels and then toilet paper until that is reduced to a couple of sheets before being removed completely.
- Cut a hole in the nappy which is increased in size until the child is actually doing poo through it.

Remember the reward! Usually the poo reward is bigger and more exciting to the child as it is given less often than the wee reward. Page 13 in the booklet covers rewards in more detail.

Have an accident plan for dealing with poo in the underwear. Page 17 in the booklet gives more information about accident plans.

The problem of not wanting to poo in the toilet often seems like a battle of wills – but if you have a clear, consistent approach with lots of praise you will win not only the battle but also the war!



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