

# TOILET TRAINING

*Tips & tricks*



**NZDSA**  
*resources*

A guide on how to toilet train your child with Down syndrome.

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# TOILET TRAINING TIPS

A child needs to cognitively understand the process of using the toilet before he/ she can be toilet trained. If a child is cognitively delayed, he/ she may be delayed in toilet training. This in no way means that he/she is NOT able to be toilet trained. The child will be toilet trained when he/ she understands the process.

Toilet training is an important step in your child's growing independence. It is a skill you want to introduce patiently at the right time.

To check whether your child is ready for toilet training, ask the following questions:

## Does your child:

- Stay dry for 2 hours or more?
- Have bowel movements generally at the same time of the day?
- Understand directions like "come here" and "where's your nose"?
- Move from one room to another without help?
- Sit in a chair and play quietly for up to five minutes at a time?

- Show periods of independence and pride in learning new skills?
- Copy adult behavior?
- Feed him or herself?
- Have no viruses and urinary tract infections that may cause persistent wetting?
- Remain free from behavioral problems?
- Have no neurological damage that could prevent bladder control?
- Not taking medication that may have side effects on elimination?
- Show an awareness of having just urinated or had a bowel movement by changing facial expression, making a different sound, crossing legs, quietness, irritability, squirming etc?

All the above skills are important - the most important prerequisite is the final one. Your child can't anticipate the need to urinate or defecate but somehow shows awareness after having done so.

Much of the success or failure of your child's toilet training is dependent on your readiness to spend a significant amount of time and energy for two weeks to a month. Start training when social disruptions are at a minimum. Distractions like the birth of a new baby, or if your child is sick can disrupt the process. If social disruptions occur so toilet training is unmanageable, stop and try again when your schedule is less hectic.

### **Before you begin**

Before you begin training, collect data on when your child is wet and dry. Keep a record every half hour for 4 to 7 days during your child's wakeful hours. After pinpointing the times before your child is wet, you can plan when you sit your child on the toilet. Consistency is very important and you can plan to take your child to the toilet when family disruptions are at a minimum.

There are a couple of things to consider when deciding about a potty. If the potty has sides or rails and the child's feet can touch the floor she/he will feel more secure. If you use a toilet insert for training on the toilet, provide a stool or box that will support the child's feet. Introduce the potty to your child. Show him/her the toilet and the potty and talk about their uses. Sooner or later she/he will sit on it. Let him/her get used to sitting on the potty with nappies on.

### **How to start**

When the child shows awareness you can begin bowel training. There are several reasons for beginning with bowel movements first- the child has more time to anticipate a bowel movement than she/he has to urinate. Also, children move their bowels less often and more predictably. So you are more likely to succeed with training. When the child is likely to have a bowel movement, calmly encourage him/her to sit on the potty. If the child resists do not argue. Wait and try again another time.

When the child is successful, praise him/her for being such a big boy or girl. Don't react too strongly or she/he may worry that not going on the potty is bad. Pay special attention to keeping your child dry and clean -when the child is kept dry, wetness becomes something the child finds unpleasant and wants to avoid.

While you are bowel training the child may urinate in the potty. Gradually, she/he will connect the feeling of a full bladder urination and wet pants. It takes time to learn this connection. The child will not immediately be able to act on the feeling of needing to urinate and waiting to get to the potty.

Place the child on the potty regularly. Don't leave

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the child on the potty for longer than 5-10 minutes. After a few weeks of occasional successes, put your child in underpants and plastic cover. Be prepared for accidents and clean up without a fuss. Keep your reminders positive - your goal is to encourage the child to be aware of his/her need to urinate. Try timing your reminders when you think he/she might have a full bladder, or when it is time she/he often needs to go.

You may also let the child use the toilet from time to time so that she/he will be able to use toilets when you are away from home. Keep a stool or wooden box in front of the toilet so she/he has a place to rest his/her feet. Help him/her climb up and turnaround.



### Some reminders

- Before you begin training, decide what words you will use for urinating and defecating. Use words that you are comfortable with at home and in public. You may consider using the sign for the toilet.
- During toilet training, do not flush the toilet until the child has moved away from the toilet. Children may be frightened by the noise or the idea of being sucked away. Some children enjoy flushing the toilet themselves - use this as a reward when they have finished.
- Dress your child in loose fitting clothing.
- Your child will first learn to be toilet trained during the day. Nap time and night time training come later. Also, be prepared for temporary setbacks. A new baby, illness, or moving may interfere with toilet training. Continue your routine in a positive and consistent pattern.



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## NZDSA resources

### Want to know more?

The NZ Down Syndrome website can provide more information and link you to many more articles and organisations.

[www.nzdsa.org.nz](http://www.nzdsa.org.nz)



0800 693 724

[nzdsa.org.nz](http://nzdsa.org.nz)

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