

Toileting

Toilet training is an important part of a child becoming independent. It also helps with social acceptance and inclusion.

Readiness

Children are ready for toilet training from 18 months onwards and it should become a priority for a child who is not toilet trained by the age of four.

Factors to consider with regards to a child's readiness to commence toilet training:

- **What is their level of understanding and intellectual development?**
Children who have a developmental age of less than two years may not be appropriate to toilet train.
- **Has the child shown any awareness of issues related to toileting?**
Indicating discomfort or wanting to be changed when they have a wet or dirty nappy/clothing, do they have a regular time when they open their bowels, have they shown an interest or change in their behaviour when in the bathroom or around a potty, is their nappy dry/clean for periods of one to two hours in relation to normal and regular fluid intake.
- **Are there any physical or medical reasons why a child should not commence toilet training?**
Consider other issues that may impact on child's ability to be toilet trained, for example: do they have a way of communicating their need to use the toilet? Can they plan and organise themselves to get to and use the toilet? Do they have any physical difficulties affecting managing clothing, sitting on the toilet, getting on/off the toilet, washing their hands? What is the child's sensory awareness; do they notice in time that their bladder is full? Do they have unusual sensory sensitivities such as to noise, smells or touch?
- **How does the child learn; can they follow a photo or symbol routine or do they need step by step modelling and imitation?**
- **Does the child have any behavioural issues related to toileting such as fear, anxiety, and dislike of new routines?**

Strategies for determining readiness

- complete a daytime chart over a two week period
- record times and dates for bladder and bowel movements
- monitor fluid and food intake
- analyse data for patterns of wetting/soiling and length of time spent dry (one to two hour period indicates has bladder and bowel control).

Developing a routine

- establish regular times for toileting e.g. take the child to the toilet at the start of the day, at each play-time, after drinks, before bath time.
- once a pattern is identified, encourage the child to take responsibility for going to the toilet at these pre-agreed times
- if the child uses a visual timetable, build in these toileting times as part of a natural sequence of events

- for children with more profound communication/intellectual disabilities who cannot follow visual/picture schedules, use an object of reference (a real life item the child can associate with the activity) such as a toilet roll. Keep this in the same place and give it to the child to hold and take to the toilet. When complete return the object of reference to its usual place
- remember to build dressing and hand washing into toileting routines to ensure you are building up a normal sequence of behaviours.

Sensory issues

These issues are common in children with Autism and may require some analysis on the part of the carer but consider:

- is clothing an issue; does it irritate or make the child feel secure then insecure when removed?
- does sitting on the seat affect the child? do they feel unstable, or dislike the texture or the temperature?
- do they react to the smell of the bathroom or soap?
- do they dislike the sensation of liquid or bar soap?
- are they afraid of noises in the bathroom such as hand dryers or flushing?

If you think any of these may be an issue, consider if you can change the environment or help the child to adapt in a step-by-step process.

Habit training

The aim is through application of a regular routine the child develops an understanding of eliminating in the toilet.

- complete an elimination chart in conjunction with monitoring eating, drinking, exercise and other activities
- analyse data and develop a regular toileting routine at 10-15 minutes before expected time to eliminate using a prompt or cue to initiate the routine
- should accidents occur calmly clean up child and resume schedule.

Not eliminating in the toilet bowl/potty

- use a clear explanation or visual clue as to what is the desired behaviour
- use children's story books or a social story for children with Autism/communication difficulties.
- increase fluid intake several minutes prior to toileting
- create a calm and relaxing atmosphere using music, use favourite calming toys or materials
- minimise words and distractions
- ensure child sits on the toilet long enough to relax.

Boys not aiming in the pan

- go through what you expect prior to beginning
- check standing position, sticker feet or a guide on the floor could be used to prompt where to position themselves
- put items in the pan to aim for such as a piece of cereal
- colour the water in the pan to create a visual contrast.

Issue	Strategy/advice
Adjusting clothes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teach child to check their clothes, a long mirror in the toilet can be useful • wear clothing with elastic waists, soft materials, loose fitting.
Wiping bottom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • try disposable wet wipes for extra sensory feedback • check child knows or teach how much paper to use, how to organise and hold the toilet paper • again looking into a long mirror while they do this may be helpful
Washing hands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set and always follow a routine • write/draw pictorially routine – display above sink, use as a checklist • give precise instructions
Sitting on the toilet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use a seat insert if the toilet is an adult size • use a hand rail or toilet frame • use a non-slip box for foot support

Useful resources:

Please also see our parent handout called Toilet training for children with ASD

NHS website: How to potty train <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/potty-training-tips/> (Follow links within the document for [Potty training with a disabled child](#))

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/potty-training-problems/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/bedwetting/>

Contact details

Children's Therapy Services

Telephone number: 0300 019 2936

For further general health-related information, please ask the relevant department for an information prescription or contact:

Patient Experience
 University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust
 Longfleet Road
 Poole
 Dorset
 BH15 2JB

Telephone: 0300 019 8499

www.uhd.nhs.uk

We can supply this information in other formats, in larger print or have it translated for you. Please call the Patient Experience Team on 0300 019 8499 or email patientexperienceteam@uhd.nhs.uk for advice.

If you wish to make any comments or to ask about any research evidence used to write this leaflet, please contact the Patient Experience Team on 0300 019 8499, write to the Patient Experience Team (address above) or email patientexperienceteam@uhd.nhs.uk

Poole Hospital, Longfleet Road, Poole, Dorset, BH15 2JB

Author: **Rebecca Shelton** Date: **February 2021** Version: **Three** Review date: **February 2024** Ref: **203/21**

t: 01202 665511 w: www.uhd.nhs.uk : @UHD_NHS : @UHTrust : @uhd_nhs