

Toilet Skills Workshop
Lincolnshire Parent Carer
Forum

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Aims

- To understand toilet skill development and why to use it.
- To understand and be able to implement a staged approach to toilet skills development.
- Discuss the use of containment products and alternatives
- Discuss how to manage periods when using containment products

What is toilet skills development?

- Toilet skills development is the process of teaching children the skills they need to use the toilet, either on their own or with assistance.
- Toilet training requires a number of skills that children need to learn to do in a set order. It can be complex and learning each skills can take time.
- Becoming toilet trained is a developmental skills like learning to walk and talk.
- Starting a toilet skills program can feel like a big challenge however the longer a child wears a nappy the harder it may be to introduce a new place for them to wee and poo.

(Bladder and Bowel UK 2019. ERIC 2023)

Readiness signs

- There is no research base for “readiness signs”. (Kaerts et al 2012)
- Its is not always easy to apply the idea of “readiness signs” to children with different developmental or physical needs.
- Knowing they need a wee or a poo is often the last step a child will learn.
- It should not be assumed that a child is wetting or soiling because of a learning, sensory or developmental need.

One Step At A Time

This approach was developed by the Continence Foundation of Australia (2010) as a successful tool for use with all children. Each step brings the child closer to the goal of being toilet trained.

[One Step at a Time - A parent's guide to toilet skills for children with special needs | Continence Foundation of Australia](#)

Step One – Setting the scene

This is the skill development stage.

Start by the time a child is 2 years. Early steps beneficial to all children. This stage is about establishing healthy habits and introducing the potty/toilet.

Step 2 – Developing the skills needed

still the skill development stage

This step is about the child developing a number of skills to enable them to use the toilet, its not just about being able to do a wee or a poo in the right place.

At the end of this step the child should be happily sitting on the toilet for up to two minutes or so (long enough to do a wee/poo), although at this stage the child is not really expected to use the toilet. That will hopefully be achieved in step 4.

Step 3 – Raising awareness

still skill development

In this step the child needs to be aware that they are wet and due to nappies being very absorbent we will need to use either kitchen roll or underwear so the child feels the wee.

To progress to the next step they need to be able to stay dry for at least 1½ hours, or longer and have no underlying problem with their bowels. They need to be passing good amounts of wee and not just dribbles. Poo should be soft and formed.

Step 4 – Using the toilet for wees and poo

This is the **formal toilet/potty training stage**.

Children should now have all the supporting skills needed and parents will have a good idea of how often their child does a wee or poo.

Toilet training is best started when the child is not experiencing any other life change. It should be introduced in a matter of fact way, as a normal every day activity. The open-door policy allows the child to see other members of the family using the toilet and that it is a normal process.

Step 5 – night time control

- This is a complex interaction between body and brain.
- Children should be reliably dry during the day for at least 6 months prior to tackling night time wetting.
- Discourage over-drinking before bed. Don't restrict fluids but the last drink should be around one hour before bed.
- If the child takes a drink to bed they will need to be weaned off it.
- The child should be taken to the toilet just before bed.
- Parents should not wake/lift a child to use the toilet. Children will have no memory of this in the morning and it is counter productive.
- Children should be assessed for constipation if they are reliably dry during the day but remain wet at night.
(Rodgers 2017)

Goal setting

- Goal setting is a useful tool to use when discussing toilet skills development, both short and long term.
- Some examples of goals could be
 - ‘My child will be able to sit on the toilet for 30 seconds’
 - ‘My child will be able to pull up their underwear’
 - ‘My child will tell me when they want to go to the toilet by using the PEC card’
- You will then need to have an action which will support achieving the goal, for example
 - ‘Using an egg timer to time 30 seconds.’
 - ‘Parent/carer to put their hands over the child’s hands to show how to pull up underwear’
 - ‘Parent/carer to use the PEC card every time they take the child to the toilet.’

Toilet programme

- A basic structured toileting routine should be based around how long a child can hold their urine.

Basic routine for a child who holds their urine for 2 hours

- A drink every 1hr 45 minutes, approx. 200mls
- Take the child to the toilet 15 minutes after they have had a drink
- If the child has a wee then the routine is reset
- 20 minutes after meals a child should be taken to the toilet and encouraged to open their bowels unless they already have a natural bowel routine.

Sitting position

COP A SQUAT

CORRECT  **INCORRECT** 

When standing, the puborectalis muscle cinches the colon shut keeping waste in.

Our colon at 180 degrees - **Standing**

Puborectalis muscle

SOLUTION: When we elevate our feet at a 35 degree angle, the puborectalis muscle fully opens, allowing for easier elimination.

At 90 degrees unnatural - **Sitting Position**

Partially open

At 35 degrees natural - **Squatting Position**

Fully open

DRJOCKERS.COM

Cop a Squat 2015



Poor sitting position



Sensory considerations

- Is the child hypo or hyper sensitive?
- Noise
- Smell
- Space/Touch.
- Vestibular:
- Proprioception:
- Interoception:

Continence products

- Prolonged use of disposable products can result in children not recognising the sensation of being wet. This can delay toilet skill development.
- Delaying toilet training until an arbitrary decided age or until they show readiness signs is not appropriate. There is evidence to suggest this will delay bladder and bowel control, lead to constipation and nappy dependency. (Consensus document 2021)
- Children who do use disposable continence products should be toileted using a structured toilet routine however they should not have their product changed unless it is indicated.

Alternatives to continence products and toileting aids



Handheld urinals.
Washable pads and pants.
Urinary sheaths for boys.
Urine directors.
Bottom wipers.



Periods and continence products

- There is little research on using period protection when using a continence product and the decision should be a personal choice.
- Continence products are designs to absorb urine and contain poo.
- Sanitary protection is designs to absorb blood which has a thick consistency than urine.

- If the choice is to use a sanitary product then choose one with a breathable back
- Sanitary products should be put inside the continence product ensuring a firm fit and that the fit of the continence product is not changed.
- Change the sanitary protection regularly.

(Bladder and Bowel UK 2023)

Key Points

- Most children can become toilet trained.
- There is no evidence base for “readiness signs”. Some children will never show signs.
- Formal toilet training should be triggered by bladder/bowel maturity.
- Toilet training is a skill to be learnt like all other skills.
- Knowing they need to go is the last step they will learn and some children will always need to be toileted on routine.
- There is no timeframe to the steps as all children will go through the steps at different paces.
- Skills should be developed from birth to try and enable it to be just part of the day but toilet skills can be started at any time.
- No child should be treated differently, unless they have a bladder or bowel abnormality or medical condition which means they cannot become continent.
- Just because a child is non verbal does not mean they can not be toilet trained.

Questions?

- The information in today's presentation should give you a good basis to start toilet skills with your child or the children in your setting.
- If you feel you need more support please contact the 0-19 Children's Health Team on 01522 843000.
- Parents and carers can make a self referral to the Health Visitors or Children and Young Peoples Nurses using the above telephone number.



Resources

- [Interoception and toileting – ERIC](#) – information in interoception
- Social stories resource www.autism.org.uk/about/strategies/social-stories-comic-strips.aspx
- Toilet training video Elmos potty time <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxlOzJrOlaU>
- Toms toilet triumph social story https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ieZs8Oo2_uE
- [Pirate Pete's Potty | Potty Training Video For Toddlers | Story Time – YouTube](#)
- [Princess Polly's Potty | Potty Training Video For Toddlers | Story Time – YouTube](#)
- [Toileting - a guide for parents and carers \(autism.org.uk\)](#)
- www.ERIC.org.uk
- www.BBUK.org.uk
- [One Step At A Time | Contenance Foundation of Australia](#)
- [Children who will only poo in a nappy and other toilet avoiders - ERIC](#)
- [Constipation in children: symptoms, causes and relief - ERIC](#)
- <https://eric.org.uk/information/school-toilet-policy/>
- <https://eric.org.uk/information/toilet-anxiety/>
- <https://eric.org.uk/childrens-bladders/bedwetting/>
- <https://eric.org.uk/advice-for-children-with-daytime-bladder-problems/>

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- Continence Foundation of Australia (2010) **One Step at a time. A Parents guide to toilet skills for children with special needs.** [One Step At A Time | Continence Foundation of Australia](#)
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- June Rodgers (2017) **Understanding the underlying causes of nocturnal enuresis** <https://www.independentnurse.co.uk/clinical-article/understanding-the-underlying-causes-of-nocturnal-enuresis/164995/>
- National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence. **Bedwetting in Under 19s.** Clinical Guideline [CG111]. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg111>
- Eve Fleming and Lorraine MacAlister (2016) **Toilet training and the autism spectrum.** Jessica Kingsley Publishers
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- Bladder and bowel UK (2023) Using continence products during your period. Available at <https://www.bbuk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Discussing-the-use-of-continence-products-during-menstruation-Bladder-Bowel-UK-2.pdf> [accessed 10/1/23]