

# TOILETING PART 3: GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

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Helping your child use the toilet changes depending on their age. When they are under 18 months, our aim is to connect our child's internal bodily sensations with the product and where we do it in our culture. When they are over 18 months we need to provide tools for them to do this independently and take the pressure off.

## WHERE TO START?

### **Nappy free time.**

Allowing time everyday without a nappy on allows your child the freedom to move their body more naturally. Straight after a nappy change is a great time to offer nappy free time. It also allows you to notice the signals of their body motions.

### **Offer the toilet or potty.**

Some children prefer to empty the bladder or bowel as soon as you take off their nappy. If you notice your child doing this then you might like to take them over to the potty or toilet from the very beginning. Good times to offer this is first thing in the morning, after a meal, or before a bath.

### **Create a partnership.**

Changing a nappy or helping your child learn to use the toilet is not something we do to children, it is something that we do together.

### **Remove obstacles.**

As your child gains more skills we need to step back more and more. Toilets are not really designed for children. The toilets, sinks and even the hand towels are all out of reach. Our aim is to make all of these things accessible.

### **Their natural state should be clean and dry.**

Change them as soon as they are soiled or wet.

### **Avoid distractions.**

We want them to be connected to what you are doing. You are touching them in a private area of the body and so we want them to be a full and active participant in this activity. Giving them a toy, or placing a mobile on top of the change table is a form of distraction. We want the mind and the body to remain together.



## BIRTH TO ROLLING (AROUND 8 WEEKS)

### **Bond.**

Especially for the non-milk feeding parent, in the first 8 weeks of life, nappy changes are one of the key bonding activities that you can do with your child. Look into their eyes. Tell them what you are doing.

### **Take your time.**

We need to rethink nappy changes for newborns. Ideally a nappy change at this age will take 5-10 mins per change. Remember it takes about 10 seconds for a child to process what you have said. Look at them, make the statement, wait and then do it. There will be times where you need to be quicker - think if they are hungry or tired, but generally this should not be rushed.

### **Avoid distractions.**

Keep the mind and the body connected. Giving them a toy, or placing a mobile on top of the change table is a form of distraction. Instead talk them through the entire process slowly - think about all of the language that they learn when you talk about the wet wipe, or taking off their snaps, don't be afraid to show your child the poo before - remember our aim is to connect their internal bodily sensations with the product.

### **Be consistent.**

Change them in the same place in the home each time. This helps your child get to know what is going to happen here, potentially join in and build trust and calm. As time goes on you will start to see your baby try to lift their legs when you say it. Your partner might do the order of things differently to you and that is okay. As long as the key elements of slow, collaborative and talking through the process are occurring.



### **Steps**

1. Go over to your child, place your hand on their tummy, wait for eye contact and then tell them "I'm going to change you" or "It's time to change you." You can introduce baby sign language to help communicate.
2. Put your hands out to pick your child up and wait for a response.
3. As soon as your child responds, pick them up and take them to the changing station.
4. Remove the pants and the nappy talking through each step. Eg. "We are going to take off your pants. Hear the rip of your nappy?"
5. Clean wiping from front to back talking through the steps. "The wipe will feel cold."
6. Offer nappy free time and chat. Ensuring that the room is a comfortable temperature.
7. Put on a nappy and clothes talking through each step. Remember to work slowly.

## ROLLING TO PULLING UP (AROUND 6 MONTHS)

### **Change on the floor.**

For safety, place a change mat onto the floor.

### **Change in the bathroom.**

Remember under 18 months our aim is to build the association of where we empty our bladder and our bowel within our culture. The sooner you move all of these activities into the bathroom, the easier this association is formed for your child.

### **Change as soon as they are soiled or wet.**

This not only minimises mess, it also connects the bodily sensation with the bathroom area.



### ***Rolling to Pulling Up (around 6 months) cont.***

#### **Steps**

1. Wait for a break in their play to get their attention. Tell them "I'm going to change you" or "It's time to change you." You can introduce baby sign language to help communicate.
2. Put your hands showing that you are going to pick them up and wait for them to respond.
3. Take them to the changing station. Remember to do this on the floor in the bathroom.
4. Remove the pants and the nappy talking through each step. Changes need to be a little quicker - their body is telling them to move the whole time, so getting them to lie still is actually hard for them.
5. Empty solids into the toilet. Lots of older children can get stuck at this point - they don't like their poo falling away from the body, or they don't like flushing it away. Our aim is to normalise what happens to poo after it comes out of the body.
6. Clean wiping from front to back. Talk through this as well: "The wipe will feel cold."

7. Once your child is clean, offer them a wipe and say "your turn". From very early on we want to show the child that this is something that they are a part of, we are just waiting for them to physically be able to do it. If we are constantly, "No, don't touch, that's dirty", then how can we expect them in a year or two's time to want to clean their bottom by themselves?

8. Offer nappy free time. While this is optional, it is highly recommended that you give your child nappy free time every day. If you are a little nervous about this then start with the change right after a bowel movement. What you are learning here are body cues, timing as well as allowing them to connect with their body.

9. Flush the toilet and wash hands at the sink.

10. Dressing should be done together in a way that they can join in. Make sure you are choosing clothes that are easy to take off and put on.

### **PULLING UP TO STANDING (AROUND 6-12 MONTHS)**

Once pulling up to standing your child's body is physically ready to control their bladder and their bowel movements they just need practice, motivation and time to connect the sensations to the bodily function.

#### **Set up.**

Make sure you have set up the bathroom - see Toileting Part I: Setting Up For Success. Particularly important are the baskets to clean up messes and that contain clean clothes.

#### **Spend nappy free time in the bathroom.**

Generally at this age your child will want to be where you are. Spend more time than normal in the bathroom, cleaning or organising the shelves. That way if the urge arises you are close to the potty already.

#### **Cloth nappies or terry towel undies**

These allow children to feel wet. Discomfort is a great motivator. Modern disposables do not let your child feel wet and takes away the natural signal.



#### **Stand up nappy changes.**

Any resistance is a signal that you need to change how you are doing things. Once a child is pulling up they can become very resistant to changing the nappy on the floor. Stand up nappy changes can help. If you are not comfortable with this then you can use the side of the bath or a stool. I have also seen a low towel rack being used.

### ***Pulling Up to Standing (around 6-12 months) cont.***

#### **Steps.**

1. Wait for a break in their activity, place your hand on their body and tell them that it is time to change them. Listen if they protest and acknowledge - I know you wanted to keep playing. It is important to keep your bottom clean and dry. Let's go.
2. Bring them to the bathroom. Sit behind your child so that you can support them if they become unsteady and start to topple over (yes this happened many times),
3. Tell them that you are going to take off their pants.
4. Do this slowly - Pants down, left leg out, right leg out.
5. Roll up the shirt or if they are wearing a onesie, unsnap it and snap it over the shoulder.
6. remove the nappy and place it to the side. A wet nappy is of course easier than a soiled nappy.

7. Empty poo into the toilet.
8. Wipe front to back. Offer your child a wipe when they are clean, to have a turn. If you suspect that you need to clean more, tell them that we need to lie down to clean completely. If your child refuses, then offer to hose off. As they get older their poo becomes more solid. This is however very important to catch as soon as it happens. Watch for when they are quiet, or if they go to a corner, or if you see their face change.
9. Offer to sit on the potty or toilet to see if there is any more.
10. Nappy free time.
11. Flush the toilet and wash hands.
12. Dress when ready - might be later in the day. Pull ups are handy now.

## **OVER 18 MONTHS**

Now don't worry if your child is over 18 months and you have not done anything yet. That is quite normal in our society. Going from the beginning is not to make you feel guilty if you haven't done anything, but to show you where some of the gaps for your child's learning might be. We sometimes forget that by asking our child to use the toilet, we are asking them to change something that they have been doing their whole life. The reasons for this change are also not obvious or convenient to them. Why would they want

to stop what they are doing, go into another room, take off their clothes and sit down? So if we are starting at this point then we need to have a different mindset. We need to have patience and allow plenty of time for them to unlearn one behaviour and learn another.

Luckily there are a few developmental stages that can help us transition to toileting independence:

**Physically:** Once walking, all of the muscles that control bladder and bowel movements are myelinated. This means that your child can now learn to control these muscles.

**Socially:** The sensitive period of social development means that they are wanting to copy what the people around them are doing.

**Cognitively:** Your child is able to understand and communicate more.

Generally there are three stages to this communication.

1. they will tell you after they have done it.
2. They tell you while they are doing it
3. They tell you just before they do it (but not really with enough time to get there)
4. they tell you before they do it.

Just work out where along this stage they are at and then know that you are going to progress from there.





Most children who are resistant to toilet training are enmeshed in a power struggle with their parents. The only way to disarm the power struggle is to stop thinking that you are in control. Don't ask about the toilet, don't tell them to sit on it. Place all of the power back into their hands. Ask questions like "Would you like to wear a nappy or undies today". Make sure that you don't add conditions to that choice like "If you wear the undies though they need to stay dry". Just offer the nappy or undies and be ready for anything that might happen next. Spare clothes, rugs packed away, a cleaning bucket, emotions poised.

Easy to dress clothing. If you think about it, a big part of using the toilet is dressing and undressing. Choose clothes that are easy to take off and put on. It is easier to get undressed from a seated position, so a stool can be helpful. Sometimes wearing no clothes is easier.

Model. Take them with you to the toilet when you need to go.

Be patient. This is a process they are learning, so we cannot expect perfection from the beginning. There is also no real time frame on it because there are a lot of variables.

Our reactions during this learning period is really important. Any big reactions can have a negative impact. Even positive big reactions. "Oh my gosh you did a wee in the potty" can put a lot of pressure on a child to do it again.

If your child is holding their bowel movements for a long time, then it is important to ensure that you have contacted your doctor. Allow access to pull-ups or nappies. Many children withhold bowel movements when parents withhold nappies and pull-ups. The overriding goal is to prevent stool holding, impaction, and stretching of the large bowel that they cause. Many children need to be reassured that it's okay to go poo in nappies until they learn how to use the toilet.

## Steps

1. Set up the bathroom. See [Toileting Part I: Setting up for success.](#)
2. Name the items in the bathroom.
3. Offer your child a turn. Say, "First we need to remove your underwear (or nappy, etc)."
  - a. teach and help how to remove.
  - b. teach and help them put them in the laundry hamper.
4. Offer the potty or the toilet to sit on.
  - a. "Let's see if there is anything in your bladder or bowel".
  - b. Talk about what happens "Nothing this time" etc.
5. Flush or empty the contents of the potty into the toilet and flush together.
6. Get dressed;
  - a. It can be easier to get dressed on a stool, rather than on the floor.
  - b. Show basket for clean underwear
    - i. teach how to put on
7. Wash hands.
8. Tell your child that this is how you use the toilet. If they would like to use it again, they can at any time.

Some children will want to repeat one or more steps. That is okay. Remember this is a learning process. The only key thing to add each time is to wash their hands each time they touch the toilet.



## AT NIGHT

Once a child is 70% successful at using the toilet during the day, then it is a good time to remove the nappies for sleep time. You might have noticed that your child cries out a few hours after falling asleep at night. Your child's body is now very aware of the sensations and sometimes this is a sign that the body is trying to wake them up.

Taking advantage of this now, teaches your child to wake up when they have this sensation. As your child grows the body makes an antidiuretic hormone which rises at night to tell the kidneys to release less water. Some children may not have enough of this hormone until their later years, and some, depending on hereditary never get it.

**There are also other factors that can contribute to bedwetting as a child gets older.**

- Deep sleeping. Many children who wet the bed sleep so deeply that they don't wake up to use the bathroom.
- Emotional or social factors. For example, a child may have a new brother or sister

### How to:

- Give your child most of his or her fluids in the morning and afternoon.
- Have your child avoid caffeine, such as from chocolate or colas.
- Avoid dairy after 5pm.
- Use low lighting – plug-in lights that are on sensors are handy at this stage.

### Steps

1. Listen for the cry 9.30 or midnight
2. Pick up your child and take them to the toilet. You do not need to properly wake them. Tell them that they were crying out as their body needed to do a wee.
3. Remove the lower clothing and sit them supported on the toilet.
4. Tickle the small of their back - this can trigger the spinal galant reflex which can allow the bladder to be released.
5. Wipe and then dress.
6. Flush the toilet and wash hands.
7. Return to bed.

## GOING OUT

Be prepared. Take a change of clothes and be ready for any misses.

Offer choices. Your child can choose to wear a nappy or undies.

Use the toilet if your child requests it - even if wearing a nappy. This is important because telling them not to worry because they have a nappy on, can be confusing to them. This might mean stopping the car or looking for a public toilet.

Model. As soon as you arrive at your destination, use the toilet. This shows your child that you can use the toilet when you are away from home as well.

