



Potty Train Your Child With Autism

Prepare to be Patient

Toilet training is never easy, and for many children with autism or other related disorders, it can be a real challenge. Some of the usual motivations for toilet training may not be present for these children.

Most children with autism or other related disorders can learn to use the toilet, but it takes time, energy and perseverance. In fact, for most families, this means staying home for at least the first few days and spending most of each day working on this goal. If you have more than one child, ask a friend to watch your other children the first day or two. If your child is in school, let your child's teacher know you plan to start potty training. Your child's teacher may be able to help out.

Be Sure Your Child is Healthy

Take your child to his pediatrician before starting. This will ensure that he does not have health concerns that could make training more difficult. Your child's pediatrician might recommend a visit to a gastroenterologist, or may have a simple solution to fix the problem, such as a small change in diet.

When to Start Training

Typically a child is interested in toilet training when he shows that:

- He knows he had an accident
- He can pull his pants up and down
- He is comfortable sitting on a toilet

Some children may be ready to use the toilet before they have mastered all those other skills. For these children, they need to be able to walk and be able simply to stand up and sit down. It also helps if your child can follow basic directions.

Drink Water

Check with your child's doctor to find out how much liquid your child can safely drink in a day. Then, give him that amount of liquid for a few days. If possible, mix juice with water, or alternate between milk, juice and water.

The more fluids your child drinks, the more likely he is to urinate often--and be successful in using the toilet.

No sodas and caffeinated drinks, such as iced tea, and be mindful that too much milk can sometimes lead to constipation (hardening of the stool).

Get Ready

Put together all the things you will need to keep your child comfortable and content while seated on the toilet:

- Bring books, toys and even a TV into the bathroom.
- Collect motivators, or special treats, to give your child when he successfully uses the toilet. Save these special rewards for when he urinates in the toilet.
- Make sure that the toilet is comfortable. Children may be most comfortable on a potty seat with handles that help them feel secure while sitting on the toilet.

The Basics

Plan to stay home for the first few days to a week and have lots of clothes ready. Your child should wear underwear during the day. This will allow you to monitor for accidents and for your child to feel the wet sensation.

Children are most likely to be successful if they have had plenty to drink and spend a lot of time sitting on the toilet. For children who have never successfully used the toilet:

- Your child should sit on the toilet many times in a day until he urinates in the toilet.
- Parents should keep the bathroom fun with toys, singing songs and interacting.
- Parents should give praise and rewards for urinating in the toilet.

How to Begin

At first, start intensive toilet training by having your child sit for five to 10 minute periods every five to 10 minutes until your child urinates. When your child does not urinate, lengthen the time they are off the toilet to 15 minutes, then 20 minutes and then 30 minutes.

- Go slow to give your child the chance to be successful.
- Use rewards. Each time your child urinates in the toilet give lots of excited praise and allow your child to get off the toilet.

Dealing with Accidents

Be prepared for accidents. All children have accidents when they are just starting out. If your child has one:

- Give feedback in a neutral voice, such as no wet pants or you pee in the potty.
- Take your child to the bathroom to finish urinating in the toilet.
- Have him sit on the toilet for five minutes after an accident.
- Do not yell or punish your child for accidents.
- Help your child to change clothes, but do not give positive attention during changing.
- Return to your child's schedule of sitting on the toilet.

Nighttime Training

Children should continue to wear a diaper or pull-up at night, as well as during naps and car rides.

- Limit his fluids after dinner--many children go all day without drinking and drink a lot fluids at night. This makes it difficult to stay dry during the night.
- Have your child go to the bathroom right before bed and immediately when he wakes up.
- Watch to see if your child is waking up with a dry diaper.
- Give rewards and praise for waking up dry.

Focus on Bowel Movements

Generally, children will have only a few problems urinating, but they may have trouble with using the toilet for a bowel movement. There can be many possible reasons, including constipation or the sound of the bowel movement hitting the water.

If the child will only have a bowel movement in a diaper, follow this step-by-step process:

- Go into the bathroom to have him make a bowel movement in his diaper.
- Help him have a bowel movement in the diaper while sitting on the toilet.
- Pull down his pants down before sitting on the toilet with his diaper still on.
- Have him sit on the toilet with his diaper off.

These steps may take a long time, and you may need to break the steps down further. The key to success is making it possible for your child to succeed and earn that motivating prize.

Toilet Teaching Tips for Working Parents

Parents should work with their child for five to six days to achieve their results. But if this is not possible, there is another approach:

- Record when your child is urinating and making a bowel movement.
- Sit your child on the toilet based on that schedule.

The more often you do it, the better, because it gives your child more chances to be successful, win motivating prizes and reinforce positive behavior.

