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Learning to use the Toilet

How will I know my child is ready to start learning about using the toilet?

- Once your child begins to show they are recognising their bodily functions and are interested in the learning process. This is usually from around 18 months up to two or three years as every child's development and readiness is individual.

- When a child starts to let you know their nappy is wet or dirty can be a good time to start talking with your child about using the toilet.
- Another sign can be when your child's nappy is dry for longer.

How do we start?

- Start with watching your child's cues and behaviour around when they use their nappy or are watching you use the toilet. Introduce the words in relation to toilet training, "oh you are doing a wee or a poo".
- You may start by sitting your child on the toilet using a seat attachment (designed for children) or step up attachment on the toilet allowing them to comfortably use the toilet. An incentive for the child might be to be like mum/dad/siblings using the 'big toilet'.
- Your child may learn by watching other family members.
- You could begin by seeing if your child would like to sit on the toilet briefly between nappy changes so they become familiar using the toilet. It doesn't need to be a long period - be led by their cues and language.
- Toilet training is best started in the home in a familiar relaxed environment.

What about a potty?

- Some parents choose to begin toilet training by sitting them on a potty. However, keep in mind it may give

more steps to master before they transition to the toilet. It might also mean you will need to take the potty with you everywhere while toilet training.

When do I introduce underpants?

- Most parents start toilet training using the nappy or pull up before moving to underpants.
- This is a big step and your child may be excited to wear their very own underpants. Some children love choosing their own underpants.
- You can explain they no longer need nappies and promote the exciting prospect of using the toilet.

Starting the process

Watch your child's behaviour and look for cues they need to or are actually doing a wee or poo.

Some children may:

- Stop the activity they are doing and look around, maybe at you.
- Start stepping or wriggling on the spot.
- Pull at their nappy.
- Actually tell you they are going as they have learnt the words from you.
- Go off to a quiet place to be on their own.
- Have a concerned look on their face.
- Come to you.

- Go to the potty or bathroom.
- Make certain sounds or noises.

You might need to get their attention, give them a bit of time to finish their activity or prepare for change then invite them to use the toilet. They may not want to leave the activity so remind them they can come back to what they were doing.

- Keep the time a positive one, some parents express excitement when their child uses the toilet whether it's just practice or they are successful. Offer praise for the effort they have made. eg 'Well done for sitting'.
- Expect accidents. If your child has an accident let them know it's ok and we're learning. Children don't have accidents on purpose. Change and clean up in a 'no fuss' manner and let them know they can try again later.
- Try not to do many reminders or requests for your child to use the toilet. We don't want too much pressure! e.g. 'I can see you need to go to the toilet you're moving around a lot, time to go to the toilet now'.

The best clothing to wear when toilet training

- Use clothing that is easily removed by the child.
- If you are using underpants ensure they are not too tight and easily removed.

- Sandals in the warm weather. If they have an accident their shoes and socks might become wet requiring a change of shoes and socks.
- Always take a spare set of clothes with you when you're out and about.

Is my child ready?

- If your child regresses or makes it clear they are not ready to start toilet training (even after a month of trying to toilet train), do not push or force the issue. Stay calm as it can create a negative toileting experience for them. Simply explain it's OK and let them try again at another time. They may go back into nappies temporarily. Often they will decide to start using the toilet again after a short break.
- It's not ideal to start toilet training during times of stressful major life events, such as when a new baby is born or moving house.

What about night training?

- It is not uncommon for children to be fully toilet trained during the day time but not stay dry overnight.
- Expect accidents along the way. You will need a waterproof mattress protector. Have some clean sheets and spare pyjamas on hand so any changing overnight is quick, not too disruptive.

- Encourage your child to use the toilet before bedtime at night and don't encourage big drinks prior to bedtime.
- You might have a dim light in their room or corridor so if they wake up at night they can find their way to the toilet or call out to you.
- Waiting until you get some dry overnight nappies is the best time to start.

Hygiene

- You will need to wipe your child's bottom in the beginning. Be sure to wipe front to back until clean and teach your boys to shake their penis after a wee.
- Boys usually start sitting then work on standing for a wee.
- Learning to lift and replace the toilet seat is their next job!
- Show your child how to flush the toilet and put the toilet lid down when finished.
- Maintaining good hygiene standards is essential for all of us, teach your child to wash their hands with soap and water and to dry their hands after every toilet experience, even if it's a practice. They learn by watching you.

Tresillian Day and Residential Services support families experiencing a range of early parenting challenges including:

- Sleep and settling difficulties
- Adjustment to parenthood
 - Breastfeeding
 - Infant nutrition
 - Toddler behaviour
 - Multiple babies
- Emotional and psychological health & wellbeing
 - Postnatal depression and anxiety

For Parenting Support or to Self Refer to a Tresillian Service call:

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