

PRACTICAL POTTY TRAINING

For some of you and your children, potty training was just another transitional stage completed with great ease. For others it's, "Aghhhh!" Most children are developmentally ready to use the potty between the ages of two and three. Each child is a unique individual, and therefore could be ready before age 2, or sometime thereafter. According to Jan Faull, a child development specialist, females are often a developmental step ahead of males, consequently they are often potty trained somewhat earlier than males. Typically by age 3, almost all children should be able to control their bowels and bladder during daytime. For most children, staying dry throughout the night usually takes a few more years.

If your child is displaying interest in the bathroom, it may be a good time to begin encouraging using the potty. Look for other signs of readiness, such as understanding by your child that he or she has made pee-pee or poop, or whatever your preferable terms are. They should also be indicating to you that they would like their diaper changed when it is soiled. Experts suggest that a child can learn to prefer a clean diaper by being changed frequently when needed. In addition, you may notice that they move into a private corner of a room or behind a piece of furniture when preparing to relieve themselves. When these types of behaviors are observed, it is a good time to begin teaching your child what a toilet is for, how to use it properly, and appropriate hygiene. You may want to purchase your child their own potty chair. Allow your child opportunities to sit on it at various times in order to get a feel for it and to become comfortable. In a couple of weeks, you should begin suggesting that they sit on the potty chair when they begin displaying signs of needing to "go". You may want to place the potty near their play area for their initial use, as this will avoid a negative feeling of isolation. If your child does not potty right away, encourage them to sit for about five minutes (possibly longer depending on the child) and allow them to engage in low-key activities such as looking through a book. In the meantime encourage them to potty, and give a ton of praise and rewards for their patience whether they have successfully pottied or not.

"Sinkems," that's right "sinkems!" These are colorful and very interesting disintegrating targets for children to potty on and then watch disappear. This type of reinforcer is a great way to get their interest and help facilitate the process of successful training. You also may want to offer an M&M or skittle after they have tried and/or succeeded at the potty. Earning stickers on a chart is a great way to help your child actually see their achievements, as the chart should be located in the bathroom, at the child's eye level so they can add their new sticker each time. When your child is able to communicate to you and they need to go, you may want to transition from pull ups to training pants, except during rest time. Children need continuous positive reinforcement during potty training to ensure success and avoid the possibility of regression.

Do your best to remain as positive as possible. Most research indicates that if a child is forced to use the potty before he or she displays developmental readiness, they may resist for quite some time. If your child is beyond age 3 and training is still unsuccessful, you should have them examined by your physician to determine if there is any medical concern. Pottying, like eating and sleeping are clearly control issues, and yes, your child has the control here! Your child will reach this developmental milestone in his or her own time, without too much pressure, and with a lot of positive reinforcement.

Take the problems out of potty training with these books:

- Keys to Toilet Training
- Potty Time
- Mommy I have to go to Potty!
- Once Upon a Potty
- Koko Bear's New Potty