



# Potty Training

## ***What is potty training?***

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Potty training is teaching your toddler to gain control of their urine and bowel movements. Toddlers are taught to use a potty because it is easier for them to use than a toilet. Potty training is part of helping your child develop the ability to manage their toilet hygiene independently.

## ***What does potty training involve?***

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Toddlers in nappies are accustomed to urinating and moving their bowels whenever they feel the urge to do so. Potty training involves a child learning to recognise the feeling of needing to go to the toilet, communicating their need of a potty, controlling their urine and bowel movements until they can get to a potty, and at a later stage, managing to remove their own clothes and pants. It is not surprising therefore that many children can have difficulty with potty training.

## ***When can I start potty training?***

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Children develop at different rates, and you should only begin potty training when your child is ready. Most are ready for potty training at some time between 18 months and two and a half years of age, with girls often being ready before boys.

By the age of three, nearly all children are able to control their bladder and bowels during the day. Becoming dry at night may come at the same time, but commonly a child may reach the age of six before they are completely dry every night. See separate fact sheet on bed-wetting (nocturnal enuresis) for more information.

## ***How will I know when my child is ready?***

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It is important not to rush your child into potty training merely because of their age, because friends' children are trained or because the nursery or nanny says the child should be trained by now - these pressures will only lead to problems later. Having said this, there are a number of signs you can look out for:

- Your child understands and uses the family term for filling their nappy, eg: wee or poo
- They hold themselves when they need to go to the toilet
- He or she shows signs of holding on at least for a short period of time

- Fussing for a clean nappy immediately after filling it
- He or she starts going off by him or herself for privacy when filling their nappy.

### ***Getting started***

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When you see these signs, start teaching them what a toilet is and what it is used for. You may wish for them to observe you as parents or older siblings while they use it. When you buy the potty you may find it helpful to take your toddler with you and, if possible, let them choose their favourite. Some people claim more success with a potty that plays music in response to urine. Explain to your toddler that the potty is his or her own toilet and keep it within easy reach.

Over the next week or so, help your child become comfortable with the potty, for example, by letting them sit on it without their nappy while watching television or looking at books or while you tell them a story. Whilst you want your child to be completely comfortable with the potty, you can remind your toddler what the potty is for or they may just get used to it being another chair.