



HUGS & KISSES

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1992/030768/23

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TOILET TRAINING AT HUGS & KISSES

Toilet training can be a very stressful experience for moms and dads, and it is with this in mind that I have put together this newsletter to hopefully assist the Hugs & Kisses parents in determining, in collaboration with your child's teacher, when the time is right for your child's toilet training process to begin.



Firstly, I cannot stress enough that there is no "right age" at which toilet training should begin. The correct time will depend entirely on your child and it will vary greatly from one child to the next.

Children have no control over their bladder or bowel movements during the first 12 months of their life, and little control for 6 months or so after that, according to the American Academy of Paediatrics. Between 18 and 24 months, children often start to show signs of being ready. But that being said, some children may not be ready until 30 months or older. Most children can control their urine and bowel movements by age 3 to 4. It does take longer for children to stay dry at night, but most girls and more than 75% of boys will be able to stay dry at night after age 5.

Instead of using age as a readiness indicator, parents together with their child's teacher need to be aware of signs that indicate that your child may be ready to start the toilet training process. These include your child's ability to:

- follow simple instructions
- understand words about the toileting process
- control the muscles responsible for elimination
- verbally express a need to go to the toilet
- keep a nappy dry for two hours or more
- get to the toilet (or potty), sit on it, and then get off the toilet (or potty)
- pull down their own nappy, pull-up, or underpants
- show an interest in using the toilet and/or wearing underpants

There are some stressful or difficult times when it is advisable not to start the toilet training process — when traveling, around the birth of a sibling, when your child is transitioning from sleeping in a cot to a bed, moving to a new house, or when your child is sick (especially if diarrhea or urinary tract infection are factors). Under these circumstances, it is best to postpone toilet training until your child's environment is stable and secure. Also, it is often recommended to start the process during summer as there are fewer layers of clothing to manage when going to the toilet and if an accident occurs. But with that said, it is not a good idea to wait for several months if your child is showing signs of being ready to start toilet training.

Experts sometimes disagree about whether to use disposable training pants (Pull Ups). Some think that they are just bigger nappies and might make children think it's still ok to continue voiding their bladders and bowels in the Pull Ups, and this could potentially slow the toilet training process. However, the other school of thought is that pull ups are a helpful step between nappies and underwear. *Hugs & Kisses agrees with this line of thought and recommends that parents use pull ups while their child is undergoing the toilet training process – especially when the toilet training process is initiated, and accidents are anticipated.*

Tips for Toilet Training

Even before your child is ready to try the toilet (or potty), you can prepare your little one by teaching them about the process:

- Use words to express the act of using the toilet ("wee," "poo," and "toilet").
- Ask your child to let you know when their nappy is wet or soiled.
- Identify behaviors ("Are you going to poo?") so that your child can learn to recognise the act of urination and defecation.
- Get a potty (or a children's toilet chair to place over your normal toilet) that your child can practice sitting on. At first, your child can sit on it clothed. Then, he or she can sit on the chair with a nappy. And when ready, your child can go bare-bottomed.

When you have decided, in consultation with your child's teacher, that your child is ready to start learning how to use the toilet, these tips may help:

- Set aside some time to devote to the toilet-training process.
- Don't make your child sit on the toilet against his or her will.
- Show your child how *you* sit on the toilet and explain what you're doing (because your child learns by watching you). You can also have your child sit on the potty and watch while you — or one of his/her siblings — use the toilet.
- Establish a routine. For example, you may want to begin toilet teaching by having your child sit on the potty after waking with a dry diaper, or 45 minutes to an hour after drinking lots of fluids as you then may be able to catch your child urinating. Only put your child on the potty/toilet for a few minutes a couple of times a day, and let your child get up if he or she wants to.

- Try catching your child in the act of defecating. Children often give clear cues that they need to do pass a stool — their faces turn red, and they may grunt or squat. And many kids are regular as to the time of day they tend to have a bowel movement.
- Have your child sit on the potty within 15 to 30 minutes after meals to take advantage of the body's natural tendency to have a bowel movement after eating (this is called the gastro-colic reflex).
- Remove a bowel movement from your child's diaper, put it in the toilet, and tell your child that poo goes in the potty.
- Make sure your child's wardrobe is adaptable to potty training. Simple clothes are a must at this stage and children who are potty training need to be able to undress themselves. During the toilet training process do not dress your child in dungarees or tight fitting shorts or jeans or onesies.
- Offer your child small rewards, such as stickers or time reading with Mommy, every time your child goes in the potty/toilet. Keep a chart to track your little one's successes. Once your little one appears to be mastering the use of the toilet, let him/her pick out a few new pairs of panties or underpants to wear.
- It is essential that all of your child's caregivers — including babysitters, grandparents, and childcare workers — follow the same routine and use the same names for body parts and bathroom acts. Please communicate closely with your child's teacher. Let them know how you're handling the issue at home and ask that they use the same approaches so your child does not become confused.
- Consistency is of vital importance – if you go away as a family during the toilet training process, do not resort to putting your child back in nappies. The same applies when you go to the shops or for other outings.

Above all, be sure to praise all attempts to use the toilet, even if nothing happens – and remember that accidents **will** happen. Under no circumstances should you punish or reprimand your child while they are toilet training if they wet or soil themselves. Instead, tell your child that it was an accident and offer your support. Reassure your child that he or she is well on the way to using the toilet like a big girl or boy.

Please remember that toilet training is a developmental process that a child will ultimately master at his own speed and age. Each child is unique, so there are no rules by when a child should be potty trained. Attempts to control or speed up the process are almost certainly doomed to failure, and will make your child feel inadequate and like a failure.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding these or any other issue, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards

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