

Strategies to Increase Toileting Independence



Toileting is an important skill for children to learn. Teaching this skill works best when the task is broken down into simple steps, when teaching is consistent and the child is involved in the process to the maximum extent possible. Step-by-step your child will move from needing your guidance, instructions and cueing to becoming fully independent. This document focuses on the step-by-step process of toileting, but not on toilet training. See *home strategies for toilet training* for more information on toilet training.

❖ GENERAL TEACHING STRATEGIES

- *Use visuals:* Visuals help your child know what to do next and they help your child learn the sequence of steps involved in an activity. Visuals can be photographs taken of the student engaging in the activity, illustrations (see attached picture sequence) or even videos. When first teaching a new skill, you may need to show your child the pictures one at a time to cue them what they need to do next. Over time, a picture sequence next to the toilet may be sufficient for the child to remember what to do.
- *Use modeling and imitation:* Your child may benefit from watching you demonstrate either the whole activity sequence or one particular step that is difficult for the child. For example, you can demonstrate how much toilet paper to rip off and how to fold it or bunch it up. You can also use a doll to demonstrate the activity to your child.
- *Hand-over-hand guidance:* Certain movements may be difficult for your child to learn. If this is the case you can use your hand, to guide your child's hand. For example, you can place the toilet paper in your child's hand and then use your hand to guide your child's hand while wiping.
- *Backwards chaining:* When a step is difficult for your child, one strategy that is helpful is to complete most steps of an activity for your child, but to get them involved in the last step. This way the child participates in the activity and feels successful.
- *Use simple verbal prompts:* Use short simple verbal prompts for each step of the toileting process. Be consistent and always use the same words to describe the activity.
- *Fade cueing:* In order for your child to become independent, it is important to fade cueing over time. Provide prompting and guidance only for those steps where your child needs your support. Over time, be nearby to help your child if needed, but allow your child to attempt all aspects of toileting on their own.
- *Teach social rules and etiquette associated with toileting:* It is important to teach your child social rules, such as closing the bathroom door or for boys when using a urinal to use their front zipper as opposed to pulling down their pants when in a public washroom.

❖ STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS FOR TOILETING AND WIPING

When first teaching your child, it is important to break down the activity step-by-step. You may need to cue your child to complete all the following steps.

BOWEL MOVEMENT MALE/FEMALE

- 1- Indicates need to or goes to toilet when appropriate
- 2- Closes door behind him/her
- 3- Unfastens pants (if applicable)
- 4- Pulls down pants to knees/lifts skirt
- 5- Pulls underwear down to knees
- 6- Seats self on toilet
- 7- Takes appropriate amount of paper*
- 8- Sits appropriately until finished defecating
- 9- Stands up, rotates body, reaching toward buttocks
- 10- Maintains grasp on tissue
- 11- Wipes upward firmly *
- 12- Puts used toilet paper into toilet bowl
- 13- Repeats steps 7-12 at least three or until paper toilet is clean (looks at paper for visual cue)*
- 14- Pulls up underwear
- 15- Pulls up pants/straightens skirt
- 16- Fastens pants (if applicable)
- 17- Flushes toilet
- 18- Washes hands*

***Note: Steps #7,11,13,18, may require a more detailed breakdown depending on the individual.**

URINATING FEMALE

- 1- Indicates need to or goes to toilet when appropriate
- 2- Closes door behind her
- 3- Unfastens pants (if applicable)
- 4- Pulls down pants to knees/lifts skirt
- 5- Pulls underwear down to knees
- 6- Seats self on toilet
- 7- Takes appropriate amount of paper*
- 8- Sits appropriately until finished urinating
- 9- Stands up reaches forward
- 10- Maintains grasp on tissue
- 11- Wipes from front to back *
- 12- Puts used toilet paper into toilet bowl
- 13- Repeats steps 7-12 at least twice or until paper toilet is clean (look at paper for visual cue)*
- 14- Pulls up underwear
- 15- Pulls up pants/straightens skirt
- 16- Fastens pants (if applicable)
- 17- Flushes toilet
- 18- Washes hands*

***Note: Steps #7,11,13,18, may require a more detailed breakdown depending on the individual.**

URINATING MALE:

- 1- Indicates need to urinate or goes to the toilet when appropriate
- 2- Closes door behind him
- 3- Unzips pants
- 4- Grasps penis
- 5- Directs stream into toilet bowl
- 6- Zips pants up/fastens waist
- 7- Flushes toilet
- 8- Washes hands

❖ POTENTIAL PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

QUESTIONS/ PROBLEMS	SOLUTIONS
How far should pants be pulled down (STEP 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Varies. Some children may need to pull underwear down to knees, others to ankles and some may need to pull one leg out or take underwear completely off. - Allow child to wear clothing they can get on/off easily
Resists sitting on toilet or resists going into bathroom (STEP 6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use transition object to let your child know that the toileting routine is beginning. This could be a picture of a toilet, a toilet paper roll or any other object or picture associated with toileting - Use picture sequence of toileting that clearly shows what happens after toileting (this can be reward). For some children it is important to know that the activity has an end - Allow to sit without removing clothes - Allow to sit with toilet covered (cardboard under the seat, gradually cutting larger hole or use towel under the seat and gradually remove) - Make sure the toilet seat is comfortable: some children are very sensitive to temperature changes or different textures. Line toilet seat with toilet paper, towel, diaper... - Consider using a powder room for toileting, as powder rooms tend to be smaller, with fewer distracting items. Powder rooms also tend to have less echoes. Consider placing curtains, towels and small area rugs in the powder room to further dampen any sounds. - If strategies are helpful for sitting in other places, use in this setting also (timers, screens, picture cues, etc.) - Take turns sitting or use doll for model - Sit together - Add physical support, such as placing feet on a footrest or using an adapted toilet seat - Help child understand how long to sit (sing potty song, length of 1 song on tape player, set timer 1 minute, use visual timer) - As he/ she gradually begins to tolerate sitting, provide with entertainment (favourite book, toy) or help your child relax by rubbing child's body/ legs - Consider visiting your GP to determine if bowel movements are painful

<p>Balance problems while sitting on the toilet (STEP 6)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use adapted toilet seats that provide extra support to allow a child to sit independently. - Install a grab bar, so your child can hold on to it while sitting. - Use a toilet seat that is the right size for your child – if the toilet seat is too big, it may be difficult for your child to balance. - Provide a foot rest, allowing your child’s feet to be supported. - Provide physical support by holding your child. Provide the least amount of support necessary.
<p>Doesn’t take appropriate amount of toilet paper (STEP 7)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remove toilet paper if it is a big problem and use Kleenex - Try using flushable wet wipes - Roll out the required amount ahead of time or use pre-folded squares and pile them where they can be easily reached - Give visual cue for how much to cut, such as putting a clothespin on where to tear. - Ask child to count squares before tearing - Get 2 ply versus 1 ply tissue paper as soft, absorbent tissue makes it easier to wipe. - From roll, grasp tissue and pull across length of lap, drop end, go to roll to break off (should have at least 5-7 squares) - Establish a specific routine that will be used every time
<p>Child cannot judge if he/she is finished defecating/urinating (STEP 8)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - May need to set a timer for a “reasonable period of time” and when timer goes child begins “wiping” routine. - Gradually fade out timer.
<p>Grasping of toilet paper (STEP 10)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Try bunching or folding tissue to see which works best. - Try using flushable wet wipes as they are easier to hold.
<p>Wiping is not completely thorough (STEP 13)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use flushable wet wipes; they make wiping more effective - Practice wiping hand-over-hand to teach your child the wiping motion. - Ask your child to look at the toilet paper to see when it is clean. Repeat as needed - A hand mirror can be used as feedback tool - Encourage firm upward movement from front to back - Make sure your child is using their dominant hand to wipe - Teach your child to pull apart their buttock slightly - Use wiping aid if your child has difficulty reaching due to decreased range of motion in their arm (ask your OT for more information) - If your child has decreased range of motion in their arm, ask your OT or PT for develop a stretching program for your child - Use picture sequence of wiping (see attached sequence) - Retrofit toilet with toilet seat bidet. Toilet seat bidets use a warm, adjustable spray of water to clean. It is more soothing than paper, but can be scary for some children at first.

	<p><u>DIFFERENT POSITIONS FOR WIPING:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Your child is standing on 2 feet and wiping. Encourage your child to stand with their feet apart. - Provide balance support, if necessary or install a grab bar. - Your child can stand with one foot on the toilet seat. This position requires good balance, but can make it easier to reach. - Squatting - Your child remains seated on the toilet for wiping. Child leans forward while sitting and reaches behind.
<p>Afraid of flushing (STEP 17)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Don't flush until there is something to flush - Start flush with child away from toilet, perhaps standing at the door (might mark the spot with a carpet square and gradually get closer to the toilet) - Give advance warning of flush, setting up flushing cue system, such as "ready, set, go" - Allow child to flush - If using a visual sequence, leave flushing until the end of the routine, after the child has washed and dried their hands. - Play calming music or use a white noise machine to drown out the noise of the flush - Allow your child to wear headphones while flushing the toilet - Explain how toilet flushing works and what makes the noise of flushing using pictures or a short story
<p>Overly interested in flushing or in toilet water (STEP 17)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Physically cover toilet handle to remove from sight or use safety catch on toilet - Give something else to hold and manipulate while toileting, such as tornado or glitter tube - Use visual sequence to show when to flush (after replacing clothing, for example) and provide reward when flushing at the appropriate time - Establish rule of one flush only - Provide other opportunities for water play or for observing swirling water, such as a water table
<p>Smearing Feces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take child to GP to make sure there are no physical factors why this is happening, such as your child being in pain - Review process of wiping using hand-over-hand technique. - Try using wet wipes instead of toilet paper, making wiping easier for the child. - Some children may enjoy the feel of smearing. Provide them with other acceptable activities which give them a similar sensation, such as finger painting, gloop (corn flour and water) or play-doh. - Use minimal interaction during clean up.

We hope that these steps and solutions will help you and your child. If you have any questions about the suggestions or specific concerns regarding your child, please contact your child's occupational therapist, _____, at 744-2867, ext. ____.

Example of picture sequence for toileting:



Example of picture sequence for wiping:

