

# Toilet training in child care

by Lyndsay Mundy

Learning to use the toilet is a significant milestone in your child's development. When they are ready for this important step they begin to recognise the feeling that they need to use the toilet, and they can 'hold on' until they are in the appropriate place. Developing this skill in a supportive and positive environment also promotes positive self-esteem and is an important aspect of the development of your child's self-help skills. Once your child has learnt to use the toilet both you and your child will have greater independence. To make the process of toilet training easier for your child it is essential to maintain consistency in the toilet training strategies used at home and at your child care service.

## How do you know when your child is ready to learn to use the toilet?

Your child will generally show clear signs that they are ready to start learning to use the toilet and you should take this as a cue to start the process of toilet training. When your child has a dry nappy for longer periods of time it usually indicates that they have some control over their bladder. Some children may also pull at their nappy when it is wet or tell you that they've done a 'wee' or 'poo'.

The educators at your service will also let you know if your child starts to show signs that they are ready to learn to use the toilet while at care, and they should talk to you about how to help your child with this process.

You may feel anxious when other children of your child's age begin to show signs of being ready to toilet train if your child has not yet reached this

stage. It is important to remember that all children are different and will reach developmental milestones at their own pace. If you have concerns about your child's development it is always best to speak with a health care professional.

## How can you work with educators to make toilet training successful?

You should aim to work in partnership with the educators at the service to support your child when they're learning to use the toilet. Educators should ask what you do at home so they can use the same routines and strategies with your child at the service. Sometimes they may be unable to use certain practices you use at home because these may not be suitable for the child care setting. In this case, you can ask the educators to explain why and then work with them to come up with a workable compromise that will suit you both. For example, at home you may reward your child with a food treat for successfully using the toilet, but this may not be consistent with the service's nutrition policy. Instead, the educators could arrange to either provide a reward that is consistent with the service's policies, or let you know about successes so that they can be rewarded at home.

## How can you support your child's toilet training while they are at care?

- Talk often with the educators to update them with your child's progress at home and to share strategies
- If you try something new at home which works well, tell the service about this
- Ask to see the service's toileting procedure to see if there is anything you can also do at home
- Dress your child in clothes that they can pull up and down easily by themselves. This helps to avoid unnecessary accidents



- Always use positive language and actions while helping your child to learn to use the toilet and communicate to children that it is a normal, natural process, that is not 'yukky'
- Be patient and encouraging – learning to use the toilet is a new skill and, like learning all skills, is often a process of trial and error, successes and setbacks.

## What information should be shared between educators and families?

At the beginning of the week, let educators know how your child's learning went over the weekend. Was there anything new that you tried which was particularly helpful or successful?

It may also be useful to find out from educators about your child's toileting experiences at the end of each day. Many services have a chart or whiteboard which you can look at to see how your child did that day. For example, your child sat on the toilet three times in the day and twice used the toilet successfully. Remember that setbacks and less successful days are a normal part of learning.

## What strategies should educators use to help your child?

Patience is the most important tool for adults to remember while children are learning to use the toilet. Educators should encourage your child in all of their efforts, even if they have a setback or are not entirely successful. For example, a child who has not quite made it in time to use the toilet may be reassured by a comment such as "It's great that you knew you needed to use the toilet. Maybe next time you can let me know straight away so that I can help you get to the toilet a bit more quickly".

## What if your child has additional needs?

Generally children with additional needs show the same signs that they are ready to start to learn to use the toilet as other children, depending on the nature of their disability or impairment. However, for some children with additional needs these signs may appear later and it may take them longer to learn to use the toilet. As with all children, encouragement, support, praise and consistency between home and child care will help your child to learn to use the toilet.

If your child has a physical or mental impairment or delay that makes toilet training either not possible or a much delayed process, the service must be prepared to work with you to help meet your child's needs.

## Conclusion

Learning to use the toilet is like learning any new skill – it takes time. Each child learns at their own pace and while some children will learn to use the toilet within a week, for many others the process will be a much longer one. Your child will eventually learn to use the toilet in their own time. By working in partnership with the educators at your child care service, the process of learning to use the toilet can be a positive and gratifying experience for all concerned ■

### References and further reading

- National Health and Medical Research Council. (2005). *Staying healthy in child care: Preventing infectious diseases in child care* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Retrieved 25 February, 2011, from <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/ch43syn.htm>
- Stonehouse, A. (2008). *Family Day Care Quality Assurance Factsheet #16: Positive toileting and nappy changing*. Surry Hills, NSW: NCAC.
- Stonehouse, A. (2008). *Quality Improvement and Accreditation System Factsheet #14: Positive toileting and nappy changing*. Surry Hills, NSW: NCAC.

### Useful websites

- Raising Children Network: [www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au)
- Better Health Channel: [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)



For more information on Child Care Quality Assurance please contact a NCAC Child Care Adviser.

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