



Steps to helping your use the toilet **independently**

1. **Drink plenty:** Make sure your child is having 6-8 drinks of water-based fluid a day to help keep their bowel and bladder healthy. Avoid fizzy drinks, drinks with caffeine in them and sugary drinks. Don't limit their drinks to help them stay dry as it doesn't work. The bladder needs to be filled and emptied properly to keep it working well. Ideally using a cup, as hopefully by now children are not using a bottles or sippy cup.
2. **Check for constipation:** Your child should poo at least four times a week and the poo should be soft and easy to pass. If they're passing hard poos or going less often than this, they may be constipated. Leaking, runny poo can also be a sign of constipation. [Download ERIC's Guide to Children's Bowel Problems](#) for more information. Children should be eating a wide range of fruit, vegetables in balance with other food groups. Please ask your health visitor for advice on fussy eating if this is difficult for your child.
3. **Use easy clothing:** Clothes that are easy to pull up and down are the best; avoid fiddly zips and buttons. Choose clothes that are easy to wash and dry. It helps to practise getting dressed and undressed. Let your child choose their own pants and practise wearing them to get used to the feeling.
4. **Use the toilet rather than a potty:** From the age of two years, use a toilet seat insert to make the hole smaller and use a step to help them be more independent. Teach them to manage their own clothes, how to wipe, how to flush and how to wash their hands afterwards. They need will need to learn how to do this independently rather than letting an adult do it for them.
5. **Get into a routine:** *Don't ask your* child if they need a wee or a poo as they might not know what this is to begin with or they may just refuse to go. Call it '**toilet time**' and go every couple of hours, given them simple instruction, "**let's go for toilet time**".
6. **Keep it short:** Don't let them sit for too long on the potty or toilet, two or three minutes is fine. Keep some toys handy to occupy them while they sit, but avoid ipads/phones, as they become engrossed in the screen rather than what's happening in the toilet. Try instead, rhymes, songs and copy me games.
7. **Encourage boys to sit down to wee:** They might also need a poo and sitting down will help them to go. They may empty their bladder better sitting down too.
8. **Be consistent:** If your child is looked after by a relative or goes to nursery or a childminder make sure you let them know that you're starting potty training and the way you're planning to do it. It really helps if everyone who cares for your child is doing the same thing.
9. **Give lots of praise:** For each little step like sitting on the toilet, washing hands and getting dressed. Rewards are a good incentive – make them small and instant, like a sticker or a high five.
10. **Be patient:** Toilet training is a skill which may take some time to learn, so don't be surprised if there are lots of accidents to start with. They need to have these accidents to feel what happens. Avoid using nappies or pull ups in the day, this will confuse them. If you are going out, use the toilet before you leave and then get them used to using public toilets or those in other family members homes.