

Article

# A Crash Course in Potty Training!

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# A Crash Course in Potty Training

Your toddler has passed a few milestones in his short life such as learning to eat, sleep, crawl, walk, and starting to talk. Next comes the milestone parents worry about the most — **potty training**. However, if approached in the correct way and at the right time you and your toddler will easily sail past this milestone.

One of the most common things parents ask is: 'My Mum says I was potty trained at nine months could this be true?' The simple answer is yes, you may have done all your wees and poos on the potty at nine months but it was your mother who was trained not you.

I believe a toddler is partly potty trained when he is able to do all of his wees and poos on the potty or toilet with no accidents and fully trained when he is able to go to the toilet with little or no assistance from you. In fact, when he goes without you even knowing is when you can sit back and know a good job is done.

I am sure you will agree a child who wets their pants, the carpet or the lawn is not fully trained nor is a child who is dry all day but only because the mother lives by the stopwatch and takes him to the potty every 20 minutes.

## **PREPARING IN EARLY TODDLERHOOD**

Long before you consider potty training your toddler there are a couple of things you can do that will help when you decide it is time to train him. Lots of parents are very negative about the contents of their toddler's nappy. They will greet a toddler's poo with negative comments like: 'Oh no what's that disgusting smell?' These parents give off very negative vibes. Toddlers pick up on this and start to see poos as a very bad thing and often a scary thing because mummy and daddy do not like poos.

The second thing I notice is parents change their baby and hide the contents of the nappy from them. A toddler might reach 22 months having never seen a poo. When they do see a poo for the first time on a potty or if they take their own nappy off when you are not looking it can be a very frightening experience. They do not know where this

funny, brown, smelly thing came from.

From about 14 months start to make a big song and dance about poos. Say how good your little one is for doing one and if possible show it to him and suggest flushing it down the toilet and making a bit of a game out of it. If you can make poos seem a really happy, positive event potty training will be far easier. Try saying things like: 'Well done, Mummy is so happy you have done a poo for her and Daddy will be so happy to hear how many poos you have done today'.

### **WHEN TO START POTTY TRAINING**

I believe you can only start potty training when your toddler has reached other milestones in his life. Your toddler will need enough words or signs to be able to communicate with you he needs to use the potty. He needs to have a basic understanding of wet and dry. To be fully potty trained your toddler needs to be able to pull his clothes down and back up, wipe his own bottom and wash and dry his own hands. As you can imagine each toddler is going to reach this stage at a different time and you might even find siblings or twins will reach this stage at different ages. Of course, your toddler also needs to have bladder control and you will only be 100 per cent sure this is the case when you start to train him.

I often hear from parents who have put their toddler on a potty a few times a day from the age of nine months but I believe this just makes the potty a boring place to be. Yes, he might do a wee on it but I believe it makes potty training harder when you actually come down to trying it for real.

In my experience I have found most toddlers are ready to start potty training between 22 and 30 months. Starting too soon can just frustrate you and your toddler but if you leave it too late you may find you have missed the boat and your toddler is so used to ignoring the signs of going to the toilet and of going in his nappy he refuses to train. Like most of the milestones I talk about in this book I often find girls are ready to train much sooner than boys and children with older siblings are keen to train early.

I have found most toddlers do not have good enough bladder control to train before 22 months. As I said earlier we have all heard of toddlers training very early and even babies not wearing nappies but I believe this is down to the fact parents are trained not the toddler or baby. However, there is one exception to this and it is Elimination Communication, which is raising a baby without the use of nappies. In the early days parents rely on timing and they teach their babies cues such as 'ssssssss' when they notice the baby going to the toilet. I believe the approach can work but you would need to have a lot of time, patience and dedication to use this approach. Along with age there are signs of readiness that you need to look for in your toddler before you start potty training. Your toddler might not show all of the below signs but if most are present you can start to train him.

### **SIGNS YOUR TODDLER IS READY**

- He is over 22 months
- He is aware of what is happening in his nappy. For example, he stops what he is doing, changes his facial expression, touches his nappy area or even goes and hides when he is doing a wee or a poo. You will need to watch out for this in relation to wees — most parents are aware when their toddler is doing a poo.
- He comes and tells you he is wet or has done a poo. Remember he is more likely to tell you if you make it clear it makes you happy.
- Your toddler needs to understand basic instructions like 'sit down', 'stop running' and 'bring that to mummy'. A child who understands basic instructions will understand potty training with more ease.
- Try changing his nappy just before his day sleep and again you get him up. If it is dry or very warm this is a good sign. If the nappy is dry it means he was dry for his sleep time and if it is warm the chances are he did a wee the minute he woke up.
- He needs to be able to have a basic knowledge of getting dressed and undressed. He does not need to do or undo his zips or buttons because these clothes can be avoided but he needs to be able to pull his own shorts or trousers up or down.
- He is able to concentrate on one activity such as a jigsaw, play dough or a book for five or ten minutes.

### WHAT YOU WILL NEED FOR POTTY TRAINING

You will need at least two potties. It is a good idea to have a potty upstairs and one downstairs or, if you live in a bungalow (single story house), one at each end of the house so you do not have to run as far. Try and have two identical potties: you do not want a toddler who prefers the upstairs potty. Remember the potty needs to be transportable because you might find it faster to bring the potty to your toddler rather than your toddler to the potty. I always encourage parents to have a travel potty in the car or nappy bag so you have it wherever you go. By the time you venture out with your toddler they should be happy to use any potty. When purchasing your potties remember to get one with a wide base to stop it falling over and a raised bit to help a boy point his penis in the right direction. You might not have a boy now but boys may visit or your next child may be a boy.

I do not believe in training pants or pull ups. I find they are no different to the toddler wearing a nappy and it is harder for a toddler to learn the difference between wet and dry when using them. I do believe they have a use and this is for children with special needs who want to potty train but cannot always make it to the toilet in time. One of the main down sides to them is they are very expensive and add to disappointment for you when an accident occurs and your toddler will pick up on this. Another problem I have seen with pull ups is a parent — often the father — will not react as fast when a toddler asks to go to the potty because the parent knows they have the added back up of the pull up in case of an accident.

You will need about ten pairs of underpants; these need to be loose enough for your toddler to pull down quickly but fitted enough to stay up.

You will need some toilet paper or wipes for your toddler to use after he goes on the potty. Boys do not need to wipe after a wee. You will need a bucket close by with hot water and detergent to clean up the accidents and another one to soak any wet clothes in. Not now, but in a few months, you will need a padded toilet seat. These are often readily available when you are not looking for one but as soon as you want one you cannot get them. So a good tip is to

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pick one up when you see one and do not wait until you need it. I recommend the waterproof padded ones shown on my website. Another good item to have is an absorbent potty training mat (the best ones to have are ones that can soak up lots of urine). Absorbent potty training mats are not waterproof mattress protectors, they are pads made of absorbent cotton. Absorbent potty training mats are not just for bed. You can get square ones that are ideal for lining the car seat or the sofa when you are training your toddler.

You will also need a home made or bought star chart with lots of stickers and rewards of some sort. If your toddler is going to see the stickers as a great treat they can be the reward but you might have a toddler who want a biscuit or a chocolate frog as a reward. You will need to work out what your toddler will see as a reward and stock up on this.

You will need toddler friendly soap and a small towel for him to wash and dry his hands.

You will need a step for him to reach up to the hand basin. You may need to buy a second step when your toddler is old enough to use the toilet but is not tall enough to get onto the toilet.

You will need some easy clothing for your toddler to pull up and down while training. Elasticised waists are a good idea but for the first day or so you are best to just have him in underwear.

You will need a chart for yourself to help you note when the accidents are happening and to help you see the progress as you go.

Time	Accident	Wee on potty	Poo on potty	Comments

One of the most important things you will need for potty training is time and a calm and relaxed attitude. Potty training can take from a few days to a week or two so it is very important you have the time to put into it. If you normally work and your little one is in care it is a

good idea to take a week off work so you can really give your toddler the time he deserves to achieve this very important milestone. If you just cannot take time off work then starting on a weekend is a good plan but try and take at least the Monday off.

### WHEN SHOULD THE POTTY APPEAR?

I have found it is best to introduce the potty a few days before you start the potty training. You want the potty to be a new and exciting thing — you are going to introduce it to your toddler as if you have just won a million dollars. You will need to sound really excited and say: 'Wow George! Here is your new potty. On Friday you are going to start doing all your wees and poos in it. We are going to have so much fun and when you do a wee or a poo in it you are going to get a sticker and mummy is going to do a funny happy dance'.

I often hear people suggest you introduce the potty as early as nine or ten months but it really just becomes a useless object to your toddler if it is left to hang around with no purpose and this seems to have negative affect on training.

Another common tip given to parents is to allow their toddler to watch them use the toilet. I do not recommend this approach as it has a negative effect on some toddlers. They get frightened of the big toilet and already fear the whole idea of potty training before you start. Taking your toddler to the toilet when you go also seems pointless when you are going to train him to use the potty not the toilet.

**TIP:** You do not have to wait for summer to potty train a toddler. In fact, it is often harder in summer because accidents can go unnoticed while your toddler is playing outside. Also, we are often busier in summer and out of the house more.

### HAND WASHING

A good way to tell if your toddler is ready for potty training — and to help him get ready for training — is to teach him the difference between wet and dry. This can be done through playing with water and teaching him to dry his wet toys or at bath time by teaching him



he is wet and needs to get dry with a towel. But most often the best time to teach him is when he is washing his hands.

By 22 months your toddler should be in the routine of washing and drying his hands before each meal or snack time. In the couple of weeks leading up to potty training you can teach your toddler to tell you if his hands are wet or dry. When he washes them you can say: 'George has wet hands' or ask him if his hands are wet or dry. At first he might not know but as time goes on and you talk about this more he will soon say his hands are wet. Teach him to dry his hands on a small towel and again ask him: 'Are your hands wet or dry?' It will amaze you how fast he will learn the difference. If your toddler finds these questions impossible to answer he is just not ready for the potty yet.

Another good thing to try is getting your toddler to help you hang the washing on the line. Ask him to pass the wet the sock and have a wet and a dry one for him to choose from. If you make a big deal about him getting these tasks right it will help him to understand the concept of wet and dry.

### **A FEW DAYS BEFORE**

A few days before potty training starts you will need to talk to your toddler and explain: 'In four days I am going to teach you how to use the potty'. Act excited when you tell him and explain the steps you are going to take and how much fun it is going to be. At some point over these few days you should take your toddler to the shops to pick some big boy or girl pants and explain to them how special they are and how happy you are going to be when they are able to wear them.

### **IS HE REALLY INTERESTED IN THE IDEA?**

To work out if he is really interested and ready pick a day or two when daddy will be around. Then you tell daddy you need to go to the toilet and get him to come with you. Daddy then needs to reward you for going by giving you a sticker or treat and adding a star to the chart. Your toddler should see the fuss and will want the treat. If he suggests he goes to the toilet too tell him in a few days it will be his turn and he can get a sticker and/or treat. If he agrees with this idea you know he will be interested in potty training when you start in a



few days time. If he shows no interest give it a few more weeks and try this approach again. If he still shows no interest in a few weeks but is meeting my other goals for starting I would give potty training a go.

### **TWINS**

It is not always a good idea to potty train two or more toddlers at once. Like everything, it has its pros and cons. The good points are if you are staying home for a few days you only have to do this once and you will only have a few days of extra washing and cleaning up to do.

But I rarely see two toddlers ready at the same time, especially if they are different sexes. Also, it is harder to give your toddler the attention they need when you are trying to teach two or more of them at once.

If you are going to try and train more than one toddler please get a second set of hands to help and delay training until all the toddlers are showing the signs of readiness, especially if you have older or younger children to deal with as well. Remember, if you try to train a toddler who is not quite ready things may not go too well.

In my experience if you just concentrate on training one toddler the other toddler, even if they are 10 months younger, will soon want to copy the trained toddler especially if they see the first toddler getting lots of praise and rewards for his efforts.

### **POTTY TRAINING DAY ONE!**

It is very important that for the first day of potty training you will have no interruptions and you can totally focus on the job at hand. If you have older or younger children you are best to arrange for another set of hands to look after these children for at least the first day of potty training.

You will need to pick a room in the house to spend the first day of potty training. It is best if this room non-carpeted: remember there will be some accidents and your life will be easier if they are on a

floor you can easily clean. It is very important to spend 99% of the day in this one room so you can really focus on your toddler and the potty training. I never use a bathroom as they are too small and impossible to stay in all day. You will need to have spare clothes and all the items you need for accidents in the potty training room with you.

You will need to have an excited attitude to the potty training and this day. When you talk about it you need to sound really excited. If your toddler tries to stray from the room you are in you will need to remind him by smiling and saying: 'Remember we are potty training you will need to stay in here today'.

I suggest you go to the room you are going to use and take the nappy off just after breakfast. Make sure you have taken the phone off the hook and taken care of any other distractions, such as the washing, so you do not have to leave your toddler's side for a second on this first day.

After breakfast encourage your toddler to drink lots and lots of drinks because this will help him wee and the more wees he achieves the faster he will learn. However, you will need to limit your drinks for the day so you do not have to leave him to go to the toilet yourself. Make sure the house, or at least the room you are training in is warm, and dress him in only his top clothes and his new big boy pants. Bring out the new potty and explain to your toddler he is going to do his wees and poos in the potty. In words that he can understand explain to him when he needs to do a wee he has to wet his new potty. Explain to him if he thinks he feels a wee coming he needs to say 'mummy, potty' and you will grab the potty and run over to him with it so he can sit on it and wet it. Tell him how exciting it will be and how happy it will make you. Explain to him after he has done a wee he will get a sticker or a biscuit or what ever you have decided his reward is. Also tell your toddler him how you will do the potty song and dance and might even call daddy and say how well he has done — or whatever you feel will make your little one happy about doing a wee or poo.

Now you need to do some rehearsals. Act out wetting the potty. First teach your toddler to put both his thumbs inside the waistband of his

pants and to push them down to his ankles. Make a big deal of it when he achieves this small step. Your toddler then needs to learn to sit his bottom backwards onto the potty: explain to him he needs to feel the potty on the backs of his legs before he sits down. Show him how to make sure his penis is pointing downwards into the potty. Then get him to pretend to do a wee and get a pretend reward. Get him to say 'mummy, potty' and do it all again in a very excited way. Do not worry if his speech is not perfect — just be sure you note what his words sound like so when he says it you know to grab the potty. You will also need to teach him how to pull his pants up when he gets off the potty. Do not practice washing his hands just yet as this might cause an accident.

Once you have done a couple of rehearsals ask him to try and wet the potty. Get him to sit down on it the way I described above and ask him to wet it. Get him to sit on the potty and chat to him but do not let him play with any toys and do not have the TV on. If you can, try and get him to place his hands on his knees. Have him sit there until he has done a wee or for five minutes. If he has not done a wee after five minutes ask him to get up and check. Ask him to look in the potty and tell you if it is wet or dry and if it is dry act really disappointed. Tell him you are sad he has not done a wee. Get him to pull his pants up and wait 15 minutes before you try again. It might take a good 40 minutes before you get a wee in the potty but it will happen so try not to worry.

Normally a toddler will have one or two accidents this first morning before he wets the potty. This is normal and not a reason to get upset or give up. When the accident happens show him the wet patch on the floor and say 'wet'. Ask him to feel his new big boy pants and tell you if they are wet or dry. If he says 'wet' act really upset and disappointed. Leave the wet pants on him for a minute while you clean up the wet floor and then take them off and ask your toddler to carry the wet pants to the bucket they are going to soak in, making sure he carries them at arm length. Take your toddler to wash his hands and then show him the treat he would have got if he had wet the potty. Remind him how disappointed you are he did not wet the potty. Put new big boy pants on him and ask him every ten minutes if they are wet or dry. If they are dry tell him how happy you are and make a bit of a song and dance about it. Do not forget to get him to

sit on the potty every 15 minutes for five minutes.

You will get a wee on the potty so hang in there. When it happens make the biggest song and dance about it so your toddler totally understand how happy you are and why you are happy. If you are teaching a little girl show her how to fold up the toilet paper so her fingers are covered and how to dry her bottom. Do not be concerned about how well she dries herself: you will be giving her a good wash in the bath later that day. After your toddler has pulled his big boy pants up you will need to help him flush the contents of the potty down the big toilet and get him to wash his hands again. At this point say: 'what a good job, you can have your treat now' while continuing to make a big song and dance about how good they are and how happy you are.

You will need to continue this sitting on the potty every 15 minutes, even during lunch: you may want to stop between savory and sweet at lunch-time for a potty break. At bedtime you will explain to him this is the only time he is now going to wear a nappy and that he will wear one for his day and night sleeps. You will not put a nappy on him for any other occasion. If you are going out in the car or buggy place an absorbent potting training mat under him so you do not worry about accidents. [You can use a mat when he is sitting on the sofa too.] As soon as you get him up from his daytime sleep you will need to take his nappy off and sit him on the potty.

Remember, it could take him the entire day for your toddler to get the hang of the potty. He was in nappies for his whole life and if it only takes eight hours for him to get the idea of potty training it is a great achievement for both of you.

Treat each accident the same and each wet potty the same but try two treats for a poo on the potty.

### **DAY TWO AND BEYOND**

On day two and the following days follow the same steps as day one unless you find your toddler is having more success than accidents. If he is wetting the potty often, staying dry and telling you when he needs to wee you can start to relax how often you have him sit on

the potty. Once he is wetting the potty a few times in a row you can stop telling him to sit on it and start asking him if he wants to sit on it and wet it. Remember to make a big song and dance of the wet potty and act really disappointed with the accidents. Also remember to ask him 'are your pants dry?' and if they are give him lots of praise.

On day two and three you should start to see a pattern of the times he wets the potty and this will make it easier for you to know when sit him on the potty or ask him to sit on the potty. On day two and three you can have playmates come over to help pass the day but it is best to stay home for these first few days.

You might find your little one loves the one-on-one attention so has a few false alarms about needing to go to the potty. Do not worry; this will soon pass.

### **WHEN ENOUGH IS ENOUGH**

If you try the above approach for two days and you are having no success with the potty and you feel you and your toddler are getting frustrated give up on the training and try again eight weeks later.

### **BOWEL MOVEMENTS**

It is normal for a toddler to do all of his wees on the potty but still need his nappy for his poos or to have accidents in his pants with his poos. This can be very frustrating and upsetting for parents. If you know what time your toddler normally poos you can try and sit him on the potty at this time; however, you might find he hangs onto his poo until it is sleep time and you put a nappy on him. If this happens try not to react in a negative way. Explain to him he is doing well with his wees and it is okay if he wants to do his poos in a nappy; he just needs to ask you for one.

I often get contacted by parents who have a toddler who is doing all of his wees on the potty but refuses to do his poos. I always assure them this is a common problem. I have noticed it is more common in children who have irregular or hard bowel movements. The first thing to do is look at your toddler's diet. Introduce more fruit, avoid wheat as much as possible and try and encourage him to drink more water

(or juice as a last resort) to get his fluids up. Breakfast is the best time to give him lots of fruit to try and get the poo out early in the day.

I get these parents to sit their toddler down and remind him how he used to poo in his nappy. Let him know that you think pooing in a nappy is fine. Think of a person he likes, such as an older friend or an aunt, tell him a little white lie. Tell him you talked to this person about when they did poos in their pants and they said it was because they remembered liking doing the poo in their nappy. Tell him they told you they used to get a nappy each time they needed to poo and did the poo in it. You need to tell him you think this is a great idea and a way to keep his big boy pants nice and clean.

From here stop letting him watch his favourite DVD in the day until he poos. Tell him when he poos in his nappy he can watch his DVD, but only when he poos. Explain to him he can poo in his nappy and if he needs a poo he needs to tell you and you will put a nappy on him and also put the DVD on so he can watch it and poo at the same time. Once he is happy and confident telling you he needs to poo and he is doing them in the nappy every day one day suddenly say: 'Oh no, the nappies are broken'. (You will have to have cut the tape bits off beforehand.)

Then say: 'I have a great idea' and make a fun game out of lining the potty with the nappy while suggesting he can sit over the nappy and poo. The treat needs to be something he really wants so is sure you have limited the DVD for poo time only. Then tell him to sit on the nappy and poo while you get the DVD ready. Do not press play until he sits on the nappy on the potty. If your toddler gets up off the nappy and potty stop the DVD. If you make it fun and do not pressure him it should not be a problem.

Once the poos are happening on the nappy in the potty you could 'run out' of nappies. Then you do the same thing and ask him to poo in the potty without the nappy because you really want to watch the DVD. If at any point he gets upset or shows signs of really not wanting to try to poo in the nappy on the potty or in the potty give up. Try it again in a few weeks. One day he will train himself. If you get to the point where he is telling you he needs to do a poo and is doing them in a nappy you are in a better place than a toddler who poos in his pants.

If your toddler does not get the idea of pooing and continually poos in his pants please remember this is not the worst outcome. It would be much worse if he were holding onto his poo for a week or two so when he did poo it was a very painful experience. Believe me I have seen this and it is not something you want for your little one.

### **NIGHT NAPPIES, OVERNIGHT DRYNESS AND THE DREAMWEE**

When it comes to night-time and staying dry every child is different. Some children ask for no night nappy as early as two-and-a-half years and other children might still be struggling to get through the night at the age of five. I would never even consider trying to train a child to go through the night until they are sleeping well in a big bed—for girls this might be from the age of three and boys three and a half.

It is safest to night train when your child is old enough to take himself to the toilet at night without disturbing you and I do not believe this is safe before the age of three. Children under three just do not seem to have the bladder control to last all night without needing a toilet stop and you do not want your toddler getting side tracked on the way to the toilet and getting in the habit of playing with his toys during the night.

If your toddler is over three and has been in a big bed for at least six months you could try night training. You will need at least three absorbent potty training mats for night training. Explain to your toddler you are going to try him sleeping all night without a nappy. You will need to limit drinks for the last two hours before bed, apart from a small milk drink 20 minutes before bed. You will need to ask him to do a wee on the toilet before he goes to bed and it is a good idea for you to take him for a dreamwee when you are on your way to bed. How you take your toddler for a dreamwee is you lift him from his bed while he is asleep and you quietly say in his ear: 'It's okay mummy or daddy is just taking you to the toilet'. You then take your sleepy toddler to the toilet and let him wee while he is half asleep. When you take him back to bed and he should go straight back off to sleep. If in the morning your toddler is dry you can give night training a go but if he is wet it is a good idea not to push it and keep him in night nappies for another eight weeks before trying again.



It is important you only do the dreamwee for a few weeks. If you get in the habit of taking your toddler for a dreamwee for months you run the risk of conditioning him to wee at that time and it might be a habit he finds hard to break. I suggest you do it each night for example at 10 pm for seven nights and then move it back 20 minutes for the next seven night until it is at 8 pm and then drop it altogether. If you find in doing this your toddler starts to wet the bed he is not ready for night training yet.

### REGRESSION

There are different types of regression. Some toddlers lose interest in potty training while others are looking for attention. Often the regression is caused by a change in circumstances; for example a new baby, moving house, a change in carer or even a death in the family. If you believe your toddler's regression is due to a change in circumstances the best way to handle the situation is to put firm boundaries in place. Toddlers often test the boundaries if placed in a new environment or if something has changed in the family. It is your toddler's way of saying I do not feel safe and secure. If you keep the boundaries firmly in place your toddler is going to feel safe and secure. But if you let them drop because you think wetting his pants is your toddler's way of indicating he is upset with the new baby or new house you are reinforcing that the change is scary and your toddler should not feel safe and secure. To your toddler you are also saying 'I do not feel and secure either so that is why I am going back to putting a nappy on you'.

So let your toddler know he is still safe and secure by keeping the boundaries firmly in place. Tell your toddler: 'You still have to wet your potty' and if he is wetting his pants follow my previous advice for dealing with wet pants. You should also go back to rewarding your toddler for wetting the potty. In some circumstances you may need to set a few days aside to start the basics of potty training again. If you have a new baby in the house or if there has been a death in the family you may not be in the right frame of mind to do this so you may need to get a friend in to help you.

I consider a relapse to be a toddler going from totally dry during the day to having two or more accidents every day. Just a dribble and a slight wet patch because he lost concentration for a minute is not a

relapse. The best way to react to slightly wet pants is to remind him to wet the potty more often. Do not mention the damp pants but instead praise him for wetting the potty. If you make a fuss of the little wet patch he might lose interest in staying dry.

Some toddlers decide after a week or two of potty training that they do not actually like stopping an activity to wet the potty. So they make the decision to wet their big boy pants. If this happens the first thing you need to do is make it worthwhile for them to stop what they are doing to wet the potty. The way you do this is you go back to the big song and dance you were making in the past and the same rewards. But this does not always work, especially if your toddler works out you are going to change their wet pants very quickly and they will be back in dry pants and playing before they know it, just like when they wore a nappy. If this happens tell your toddler how disappointed you he has wet his pants and explain you are a little busy just then to change him so he will need to sit on the absorbent potty training mat or a towel for five minutes while you finish your jobs. Your toddler will soon start to feel uncomfortable in the wet big boy pants and will also realise he is missing out on play. Point out to him how much faster he would have been back playing with his toys if he had taken a minute to wet the potty. As with everything a consistent approach is the best way to see results so you will always need to respond to wet pants in the same way. If you follow this approach he will soon be back to dry pants again.

While you were potty training your toddler you were giving him your undivided attention but now you have stopped. Some toddlers crave attention and will do anything to get your attention but they always prefer positive attention to negative. You will know if your toddler falls into the attention- seeking category because he will come and tell you in a very proud voice: 'I have wet my pants'. So my advice is to give your toddler lots of praise for dry pants and use the same approach as above for wet pants.

### REGRESSION IN OLDER TODDLERS

Parents often contact me about their older child, maybe four or five years old, who has been dry all night for some time but who is suddenly having lots of accidents during the night.

The first thing I would recommend is reviewing whether your child has recently started drinking something like apple juice more often during the day. Try cutting out all drinks after dinner-time at night. You can also go back to doing the dreamwee for a few weeks to see if that helps. If this does not solve the problem take your child to the GP to rule out a urinary tract infection

With night-time bed wetting it is a good idea to have two absorbent potty training mats on the bed. Make the bed up like this: put on the fitted sheet followed by one of the absorbent potty training mats. Then add a second fitted sheet and the other absorbent potty training mat. If there is an accident during the night you can very quickly go in and remove the top absorbent potty training mat and sheet.

If the bed-wetting continues and you cannot find a cause this is one circumstance where I would recommend you put your child back in nappies or pull ups so you are not making a big deal out of their bed wetting because some children go through a stage where they just cannot control their bladder at night.

A common occurrence in boys aged between four and six is they start playing their penis during the night. It seems if they play with their penis long enough the physical sensation causes them to wee. There is nothing you can do to stop your son from doing this — it is just one of those things boys do. Using an absorbent potty training mat as described earlier is a good solution as often it soaks up all the wee — sometimes the child does not even feel wet or cold during the night after this has happened. However, if it is happening often enough you might want to consider placing your son in pull ups or in a nappy.

It is very important you talk to your child about why you are putting him back in nappies or in pull ups. Explain that lots of grown ups and even ten and eleven year old boys do have to wear nappies or pull ups to bed because of accidents and it is not a problem or anything to be embarrassed about.

You may find your child does not want his friends or siblings to know he wears nappies or pull ups at night so it is a good idea to always put them on in private. If your child is going on a play-date or sleep-over do not mention that he wears pull-ups in front of other children, to decrease the chance of bullying. Explain the situation to the other parents.

### **POTTING TRAINING AND OTHER CARERS**

When parents use my crash course in potty training their toddler can go from being fully nappy dependent one week to being fully potty trained the next. Some carers find this very confusing and unsettling because it is not what they are used to and they do not believe it is possible that your child can make the transition from nappies to potty trained so quickly. It is very important you talk to your child's carers before you start potty training and explain what method of potty training you are using, even if you have to photocopy this chapter or lend them the book. It is very important that your toddler's carers follow the same steps and use the same wording as you to help your toddler wet his potty when they are caring for him. You should also take your child's own potty to childcare as they are used to using it. If your carer is resistant remind them it is your child and you are in charge of how potty training will be handled. If the carer is still resistant you may need to discuss it with the senior manager of your childcare centre or keep your child out of care for a few weeks or a day until potty training is well established. If your carer is a nanny make it clear this is how you want to potty train your toddler and if they refuse to follow your directions you will have to look for another nanny.

It is only normal that your child will have a couple of accidents their first time at childcare or with a carer after being potty trained. But if you explain to your carer how to deal with these accidents this problem should resolve itself in a day or two.

### **GOING TO THE TOILET ALONE**

When you think your toddler is old enough, he is not having accidents and he happily takes himself away from an activity to use the potty you can move the potty into the bathroom. Teach your toddler when he needs to wet the potty he should go into the bathroom and do it in private. When he has achieved this you could suggest he start using the big toilet. If you hit resistance do not try and force the issue. A lot of children become very frightened of the big toilet and do not want to use it. You could set the toilet up with a step, let them see their friends using the toilet and use a padded, soft seat so the hole in the middle is not as big so they realise they will not fall in. But let him decide when he wants to use it. Girls and boys should both learn

to use the toilet sitting down. Remember to teach boys to make sure their penis is pointing down when they sit on the toilet.

Boys with older brothers will want to wee standing up sooner than boys without. Normally, boys are around three when they start showing an interest in wanting to stand and pee in the toilet. Again, do not force the issue. Show your son how to stand and aim into the toilet. You might want to put a small floating ball into the toilet and encourage him to aim for it. This can reduce accidents.

When you are teaching your child how to sit on the toilet it is also the time to teach him how to flush the toilet. You will constantly have to ask children under six if they have flushed the toilet and washed their hands. Eventually it will become a habit.

### COMMON QUESTIONS

**1. My 4 year old little girl has worn big girl pants for over 2 years now but we don't seem to be getting anywhere with her night training. Should I be worried?** It is perfectly normal for some children not to be dry at night until they are as old as six. If at six she is still wet at night I would talk to your GP but for now it sounds to me like you need to stop worrying about the nights and pop her back in nappies. I would not use pull ups they are too expensive and she will be less likely to want to move to normal pants from pull ups. When you next try her in pants at night I would cut out all drinks after 5.30pm at night. Ensure her dinner is over by 5.30pm and get her up at 10.30 pm each night to have a wee on the loo. But if she wets in the night go back to nappies again; you do not want to make a big deal of the wetting.

**2. I have been toilet training my son for the past seven days and he is doing really well! On Tuesday he went to childcare, which I was a little worried about but he only had one accident so I was quite pleased. Today was his second day at childcare since potty training and when I went to pick him up he had had all accidents all day. The centre told me they thought he wasn't ready for potty training and asked me to send him in nappies the next time he came. I was quite upset by this as I feel we are doing very well. I think putting him back in nappies when he is at childcare is only going to confuse him. What should I do?**

Well done on the potty training. I agree that putting him back in nappies will not help your overall potty training. I feel you have two options:

1. You can explain to your son's carers that you are not happy to put him back in nappies as you feel this will confuse him and you feel you are doing very well. Let them know you are happy to pack numerous pants and changes and of clothes and you would like for them to try again.
2. If your childcare centre is not happy with this then I feel it is important you to keep him home from childcare for a week so you can continue the potty training process without going back to nappies.

**3. My son has been potty training over the last month and after quite a few accidents in the first few days we are now doing very well with both wees and poos. However, yesterday my son actually saw his poo coming out and started screaming and is now terrified when he does a poo; he literally clings onto me and cries. All his poos since have been accidents. What could have caused this when he was doing so well?**

This is very common. It is likely your son was not aware of what poo was before he saw himself actually doing the poo yesterday. Some toddlers can get very scared wondering what is this big thing is coming out of me. I suggest you use lots of positive reinforcement and explain how good it is to do a poo and it is even better to do the poo on the potty. If necessary you can go back to asking your toddler to tell you when he wants to do a poo and then putting a nappy on him. Progress to lining the potty with a nappy and then to asking your son to do a poo in the potty itself, as described in this article.

**And don't forget...**

Log on to [www.saveoursleep.com](http://www.saveoursleep.com) for regular news and updates.

Le gach dea-ghui,

*Tizzie*