



Parent Notes

# Module 2

**Toilet Learning: Systematic use of daily interactions**

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# In brief

## In this module you will learn how to:

- identify any skill strengths of your child that he can build on to develop his toileting skills.
- understand what triggers your child's difficult behaviour related to toileting and understand the effects of consequences following this behaviour.
- identify consequences that are positive for your child and use these triggers and consequences to build on your child's toileting skills.
- give your child effective instructions for behaviours that are associated with using the toilet.
- encourage your child to communicate his toilet needs to you using words, signs, pictures, gestures.
- establish some 'toilet rules'.
- make the toilet environment more 'user-friendly' for your child.
- give your child lots of opportunities to practise toileting skills.
- use labelled praise for the skills your child demonstrates.

# Effective toileting instructions

Telling your child to attend the toilet may seem like a simple task for you, but many children find this request quite difficult. The reasons may become clearer if you ask yourself these questions:

- does your child know what the toilet is for?
- can your child find the toilet in your house without your help?
- does your child understand that the feeling of needing to wee or poo is connected with using the toilet?

## **Smaller steps**

You might need to break the toileting instruction into smaller steps, such as:

- Walk with me to the toilet room.
- Sit on the toilet.
- Get off the toilet.
- Wipe yourself with toilet paper.
- Push the button on the toilet.

# Identifying your child's skill strengths



Your child may already have a number of skills, not related to toileting, that you can use to develop toileting skills. When doing the exercises in Module 2 it is a good idea to refer to the Toileting Skills sheet (Parent Notes Module 1, page 8).

Here is an example of how you might describe your child's skill strengths.



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## Motor skills

- Walk to the toilet (either assisted or unassisted)
- Push buttons (flush toilet)
- Unroll paper
- Rip paper
- Wipe self
- Climb onto a chair
- Sit still

## Communication skills

- Understand the word toilet
- Ask for soiled nappy to be changed (using words or gestures such as pointing)
- Use sign language or pictures to identify needs (such as to go to the toilet)
- Hide when passing a bowel motion into nappy
- Communicate in a physical way, by taking you by the hand or gesturing you to follow
- Understand basic instructions (such as 'sit down')

## Self-help skills

- Remove clothes
- Turn a tap on or off
- Identify objects (such as soap and towels)
- Know where items are kept (such as clean nappies, wipes and clean clothes)

## Academic skills

- Listen and follow simple instructions
- Sit and wait for 1–3 minutes
- Understand cause and effect (for example, that good behaviour is rewarded)
- Understand routines and sequences



See Workbook Pages B-2 and B-3

## IN FOCUS

### Helping your child develop communication skills

- If your child is developing verbal skills, say the word 'toilet' and encourage your child to repeat it when you are focussing on toileting skills.
- If your child communicates using sign language, learn the sign for toilet and use it when toileting.
- If your child responds well to picture exchange communication (PECS), show the toilet symbol when toileting.
- If your child responds well to pictures, create a toilet learning book to show the sequence of toileting skills. See Parent Resources for more details.
- The more times you use these communication aids, the more opportunities your child will have to develop communication skills.



## See Module 2 Page 2

Think of the skills that your child already has that can be used for toilet learning. What skills need more practise? Has your child had many opportunities to develop his skills?

### **Making toileting easier for your child**

- Dress your child in clothes that can be easily removed (such as elastic-waisted pants).
- If your child is learning to communicate with pictures, provide a picture of a toilet.
- If your child signs, make sure you know the sign for toilet.
- Make sure your child can identify where the toilet is in the house.
- Give your child opportunities to observe a family member using the toilet.

### **Making the toilet more user-friendly**

- Use a child toilet seat (known as a toilet reducer). Your child might feel more comfortable if the seat is smaller.
- Provide a step or solid box so that your child can climb onto the toilet and sit with his feet flat on the floor.

### **Making the toilet environment more comfortable**

As adults we don't put too much thought into the toilet environment. As long as it is reasonably clean, we are happy to use it. Some children find the environment in the toilet room very different from the rest of the house, which can be intimidating.

- There may be unpleasant smells or strong artificial smells, such as air-freshener or cleaning products.
- The room may be cold and drafty.
- The lighting may be different from the rest of the house.
- The toilet seat may be cold.
- The sounds of the room may be different (for example, the room may echo).
- The walls might be blank and uninviting. (You can make it more user-friendly by putting up some of your child's drawings or photos of family members.)

## IN FOCUS

### Getting on the toilet

If your child is already sitting on the toilet at regular times throughout the day, continue with your routine, providing him with labelled praise when he demonstrates his toilet skills.

If your child has not had the opportunity to sit on the toilet, it is time to see what skills he has. When you are getting your child to sit on the toilet, don't forget to use clear toileting instructions throughout the activity and labelled praise when your child has finished. Sitting on the toilet for 30 seconds is fine. Do not let him sit for longer than two minutes. Once your child has finished the activity, record the event on your Toileting Opportunities sheet.



# Triggers and consequences



**See Workbook Page B-11**

Use the triggers and consequences record sheet in your workbook to record difficult behaviour such as:

- reactions or behaviours during nappy/pull-up changes
- refusing to attend the toilet when asked
- refusing to sit on the toilet for at least two minutes
- smearing bowel motions
- removing nappies
- playing in the toilet water
- unrolling all the toilet paper
- continually flushing the toilet
- attending the toilet in some settings (for example, at kinder) but not others
- happy to use the toilet to wee but not poo.
- other difficult behaviour.

## Change time

In terms of triggers and consequences, it is possible to consider nappy changing as a consequence of wetting or soiling nappies.

Think of the environment in which you change your child's nappy. Is it in front of the TV or in your child's bedroom? Changing a child's nappy can be very nurturing. Most times the child is either on a nice soft bed or on the carpet and the adult changing the nappy is giving the child lots of attention. You might even use this alone time to talk softly or giggle and play. Do you praise your child for fetching a clean nappy or wipes when your child wants to be changed? Think about what messages you are sending your child.

When children are babies, nappy-changing time is a time for positive communication and interaction. However it is important that older children learning about toileting, do not receive positive consequences for wetting and

soiling a nappy – change time should be a swift, silent ‘non-event’ with no talking and no playing. The purpose for this is to stop your child associating wetting the nappy with a positive consequence.

During toilet learning, remain calm and clean your child up with minimal fuss and interaction even when an ‘accident’ has happened.

## IN FOCUS

### Change-time tips

- In the learning phase ‘accidents’ are going to happen.
- Ensure that you have the necessary clean-up equipment close by, for example a mop, bucket of water and changes of clothes for your child.
- Remain calm and clean your child up with minimal fuss and interaction.
- Explain to your child that he has wet or soiled his pants and needs to be changed.
- Change nappies/pull-ups or underwear next to the toilet or as close to the toilet as you can.
- If your child has the skills to change some parts of his clothing let him do so.
- Remember that your child is learning this new skill so avoid punishment or negative comments.

If a child has no physical disabilities, changing a nappy while standing in the toilet/bathroom is relatively easy. Get your child to stand and place both hands on the wall for support with legs slightly spread. Use toilet paper if you can. To get to those hard-to-reach areas, ask your child to bend over and touch both knees. Encourage your child to participate as much as the skill level allows, for example flush away the waste.

## IN FOCUS

### When to stop using nappies/pull-ups

- Many children use nappies/pull-ups like a portable toilet. This convenient portable toilet makes it more difficult for you to encourage alternative behaviour, that is, passing urine or bowel motions in the toilet.
- Wearing underwear will help your child learn toileting skills. Some children will notice that they are wet, feel uncomfortable and thus consider 'feeling wet' as a negative consequence for passing urine in their clothes.
- If you are delaying the wearing of underwear, perhaps concerned about the extra washing and cleaning, try to think about this extra work as only short-term. Using underwear and developing a toileting routine will benefit you and your child in the long-term.
- Choose a time to stop using nappies/pull-ups that suits you, your child and your family's current circumstances.
- If your child has a favourite TV character he might love wearing regular underwear with the character printed on the design.

# Household toileting rules



**See Module 2 Pages 17–19**

Examples of toilet learning 'Do' rules are:

- Child to wash hands with assistance from an adult.
- Child to flush toilet after passing a bowel motion into the toilet or nappy.
- Child to be given an opportunity to practise using the toilet before or after nappy changing.
- Child to be taken to the toilet before outings.
- Nappy changing is swift and silent.

It is not necessary to have 'Don't' rules for toilet learning

# Your toileting homework



**See Module 2 Page 21**



- 1 Continue to collect information.
- 2 Look at the positive consequences list (see Workbook page B-12). Pick at least two consequences from each category that are appropriate for your child.



- 3 Provide additional opportunities for your child to develop his toilet learning skills. Continue to give your child toileting opportunities when the wetness indicator is wet. Aim to provide your child with a minimum of two toileting opportunities per day. Record these opportunities on your Pants Check sheet (Parent Notes Module 1 page 9).



- 4 Whenever your child behaves appropriately, remember to use labelled praise highlighting his existing toileting skills. Once a day, fill in the Labelled Praise Monitoring Form (see Workbook pages B-13 and B-14) to check how many of the components you have completed.

- 5 Think of the situations in which you may be unwittingly providing positive consequences for difficult behaviour. Try hard not to provide these consequences.

- 6 Ask yourself where you are changing your child's nappy. Are you unintentionally giving your child positive consequences when you change his nappy/pull-up?



- 7 When giving your child an instruction related to toileting, follow the recommendations given in this module as much as possible. Once a day, fill in the Instruction Giving Monitor Form (see Workbook pages B-13 and B-14) to check how many components you have used.



- 8 Draw up a list of toilet 'Do' rules (see Workbook page B-15). There is no need for 'Don't' rules.



- 9 Continue to add details to the Toileting Action Plan for Module 2. You can choose skills from the Toileting Skills list (Parent Notes Module 1 page 8).



- 10 Continue to collect toileting behaviour information using the Pants Check sheet (Parent Notes Module 1 page 9).