**Special Educational Needs Inclusion Service**

**Down syndrome**

**Toilet Training**

for Children with Down syndrome

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- Toilet training is usually achieved through:
  - Physical maturity of the bladder and bowel;
  - Social awareness and motivation of the child to be trained;
  - Adult expectations that the child can and will be successful.

- Toilet training involves developmental skills which need to be explicitly taught to children.

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### Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Children with Down syndrome</strong></th>
<th><strong>Typical Children</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Average Age</strong></td>
<td><strong>Range</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dry by Day</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>1½ - 4 years 2 months</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bowel Control</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>20 months - 5 years +</td>
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</tbody>
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Becoming toilet trained is like climbing a ladder. At the bottom of the ladder is the dependent nappy-wearing child who cannot meet any of their own needs. At the top of the ladder is the child who can use the toilet independently, including wiping their own bottom and flushing the toilet. The aim of toilet training is to enable the child to get as high up the ladder as they are able. Some children don’t get to the top and may always need some help with some aspects of toileting.
Is Your Child Ready?

Although there is no research to support this, there are a few signs that your child might be ready for toilet training.

1. Age – The child has reached an appropriate age. It is recommended to wait until after the second birthday to begin considering toilet training. For children with Down syndrome, it has been found beneficial to wait until after the third birthday to begin the process.
2. Bladder Control – The child completely empties his or her bladder when voiding and remains dry for at least one and one half hours during the day.
3. Predictable Stooling Patterns – The child’s bowel movements follow a regular and predictable pattern. Also, where do they go? They might go into a corner or have a particular facial expression.
4. Motor Skills – The child demonstrates the abilities to walk to and from the bathroom independently and to pick up objects.
5. Behaviour – The child can sit on the toilet (or potty) comfortably for two to five minutes. He or she may be allowed to look at preferred books or play with preferred toys while sitting on the toilet.
6. Instructional Readiness – The child can follow a few simple directions (e.g. sit down).
7. Indicates Needs – Through facial expressions, postures, gestures, pictures or words, the child indicates needing to go to the bathroom.

Are YOU ready?

1. Do you have some time to dedicate to toilet training?
2. Have you spoken to your child’s pre-school setting to ensure a cohesive approach to toilet training?
3. Is it a good time of year? Spring/summer can work better for some families as children can wear less clothing in warmer weather and it is easier to get soiled clothing washed and dried.
4. If you are going through an already stressful situation, you may find toilet training challenging.
5. Have you got necessary supplies?
   - Clothes with an elasticated waist
   - A portable potty
   - Lots of spare underwear and clothes
Early Stages

• If possible, try to change your child’s nappy in or close to a bathroom.
• Once your child can stand unsupported, work towards being able to change their nappy/pull-up with them standing up. Have the child assist with pulling trousers down and up and wiping themselves.
• Put poo from a nappy into the toilet and let the child see you flush it away.
• Assist your child with washing and drying their hands after nappy changing.
• Bladder & Bowel UK suggest that a potty can be introduced once a child has achieved good sitting balance. The potty should be gradually introduced at set times of the day, such as after meals, drinks and sleeps, so that it becomes part of the child’s daily routine.

Hit and Miss

• Remove the nappies or pull ups altogether (except at night) so that children can feel when they are wet. If really necessary, you can try the child wearing pants under a nappy.
• Try and ‘catch’ a hit in the potty or toilet.
• Give a treat or loads of praise for success, so that the child begins to understand that this is a good thing to do; don’t tell them off for the misses.

Top Tips

• Begin trying to train your child at home and in their preschool setting.
• In the early stages, if you are out and about you can use pants under a nappy. You can also get car seat protectors for journeys in the car.
• Ensure that your child has lots of water to drink – avoid fizzy drinks or diluted juice.
• Try to time how long it takes for a drink to pass through their system.
• Make sure the child is comfortable – you may need a step to rest their feet on or a small toilet seat to go on top of a regular seat. You can get one with handles. It is important that the child feels secure.
• Watch out for cold toilet seats, many children don’t like them!
• Use pictures and story books to talk about the potty.
• Visually and social stories with photos of the toilet and bathroom may help your child to understand and remember what is expected of them.
• Use helpful tools such as a reward chart, a musical potty, stickers or small treats.
• Never expect your child to ask for the toilet, this comes at a much later stage.
• Bear in mind bowel conditions or any other condition that might get in the way of toileting.

Bear in Mind…

➢ It can take longer to toilet train a child with Down syndrome.
➢ Some children with Down syndrome may have underlying bowel and bladder conditions and may need a referral to the continence service for an assessment and specialist support. You can get this referral through your health visitor or GP.
➢ Children with Down syndrome are more likely to have problems with their urinary system, but the problems are still rare.
➢ Children with Down syndrome are prone to constipation – this is why it is important that they become used to sitting on a potty from a young age and it becomes part of their daily routine.
➢ Constipation may not be immediately apparent as stools are not necessarily hard and a child who is constipated may have been suffering for months before they are impacted and begin soiling.
➢ If toilet training is not working and you are finding it very stressful, you may need to ease off and try again in a few months.


App: Poo goes home to Pooland