

## **The Adventures of Potty Training: Get ready for success!**

For many families, potty training can be a whirlwind adventure filled with messy spills, tears and even fears-for both the child and parent. When beginning this process parents must ask themselves two important questions: Is my child ready and am I ready?

### **Is my child ready?**

Parents often ask themselves whether their child should be potty trained by now, when the question should be whether their child is ready for potty training. Typically, children begin to show interest in learning to wear 'big boy or girl' underpants by the age of two. However, it's important to understand that young children's brain and bodies are constantly developing and growing at different rates. For example, once a child's brain receives a message from the bladder, she has to first understand the connection between the urge to pee or poop and the potty. She THEN must be able to hold her pee or poop until she reaches the toilet. Wow! This is a multi-step process and involves lots of advanced brain activity for the young tot. Therefore, the readiness skills needed usually develops between 18-30 months but sometimes occurs later for some children. So how do I know that my child is ready?

### **My child maybe ready if he or she is:**

Curious and showing interest in the bathroom and big girl/big boy underpants

Able to stay dry during naps

Beginning to show an understanding (verbally and non-verbally) of the purpose of the potty chair

Can climb up to the toilet with assistance from parent

Has motor skills to take off his/her cloths, relax, and go!

### **Am I ready?**

Potty training takes lots of patience, energy and sometimes creativity! It requires countless puddle cleaning by your favorite plant and endless trips to the laundry room. It is important not to force your child to potty, but to check out the signs that he or she is READY to potty. If your child attends daycare, talk with his/her caregiver to see whether there are toilet training procedures or policies and strategies you can use at home. When your child is ready to begin the toilet training adventure consider the following tips:

- Create a 'potty' space and seat just for your child that is comfortable, portable, friendly and just his/her size
- Consider placing the potty in 'eyesight' of where you change your child's diaper to reinforce the connection between the two

- Engage in 'potty talk', the positive kind! Establish bathroom talk by introducing your child to vocabulary such as toilet and urinate while avoiding attaching negatives to your child's diaper such as 'smelly or gross poopy'. Keep potty talk positive!
- Have child practice sitting on the toilet with and without clothing
- During potty training, the child's clothing should be easy to pull up and down
- Have cool potty training undergarments that your child picks out
- Provide non-food rewards such as hugs, kisses and celebrations when child successfully use potty
- Make the potty experience fun! Create games, songs and books all focused on the joys and challenges of potty training

Remember, potty training can be a time for bonding, excitement, exploration, and an overall adventure for all! For additional information, strategies and resources on this topic and other developmental milestones check out the following:

American Academy of Pediatrics:

[http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/103/Supplement\\_3/1362.full](http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/103/Supplement_3/1362.full)

Just in Time Parenting: <http://www.extension.org/pages/22110/just-in-time-parenting-e-newsletters#.U2JnTsdyl1>

UNL-Extension: <http://child.unl.edu> &

<http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/epublic/live/g2104/build/g2104.pdf>