

Trends in toilet training have changed, likely due to the availability of disposable diapers. In the 1920s, toilet training began around 12 months old, which changed to at least 18 months old in the 1960s, and is now initiated around 21 months old with approximately half of children toilet trained by 36 months old (Rogers, 2013).

Four markers signal a child's readiness to toilet train: (1) waking up dry from a nap or overnight sleep, (2) being aware of the urge to void or stool, (3) communicating the need to go, and (4) being dry for at least 2 hours during the day (Wu, 2010). According to some experts, physiologic and psychological readiness is not complete until 24 to 30 months old (Rogers, 2013); however, parents should begin preparing their children for toilet training earlier than 30 months old. By this time, children have mastered the majority of essential gross motor skills, can communicate intelligibly, are in less conflict with their parents in terms of self-assertion and negativism, and are aware of the ability to control the body and please their parents. There is no universal right age to begin toilet training or an absolute deadline to complete training. An important role for the nurse is to help parents identify the readiness signs in their children (see [Nursing Care Guidelines box](#)).* On average, girls are developmentally ready to begin toilet training before boys (Elder, 2016).

Nursing Care Guidelines

Assessing Toilet Training Readiness

Physical Readiness

Voluntary control of anal and urethral sphincters, usually by 24 to 30 months old

Ability to stay dry for 2 hours; decreased number of wet diapers; waking dry from nap

Regular bowel movements

Gross motor skills of sitting, walking, and squatting