



Increasing Confidence and Self-Esteem During Toilet Training

Toilet training is an uneven process, but it is an inevitable one in nearly every child's life. By three to four years of age, most children have achieved daytime urine control and full bowel control (both day and night). The ability to stay dry through the night will follow a bit later, with most girls and more than 75 percent of boys fully mastering this ability by around age six.



Your child, too, will move more or less steadily from diapers to underwear, from potty to toilet, and from daytime to full-time management of his elimination processes. Many parents find, in fact, that once their child grasps the concept of one form of elimination, mastery in the other areas follows with greater ease (yet still on its own schedule). Soon your child will announce confidently in restaurants and airports that he needs to find a bathroom, will lead you by the hand to the restroom, and will confidently use a toilet he's never seen before.

In the meantime, your continued support and sensitivity to his needs will encourage his progress. As he moves from a potty to the adult toilet at home, provide him with a stepstool if he needs it and a child-size toilet seat. (The age at which this transition occurs will depend on your child's interest, your needs, and environmental requirements such as the need to use adult-style toilets more frequently outside the home.)

When he needs to use the toilet away from home, accompany and assist him, making sure that he follows the same routine (wipe, flush, wash hands) he's learned at home. Consider bringing his potty or a child's toilet seat adapter along on trips, as well as a change of clothing. It may also help to allow your child to observe you using the toilet in these unfamiliar places, and talk to him about what a big boy he will be when he can do the same. Before he starts school, make sure he can pull his pants up and down properly.

Such efforts to support your child will increase his confidence in bathroom use, but they will do much more than that. They will let him know in many important ways how committed you are to helping him learn new skills and adjust to new challenges.

By allowing him to develop at his own rate, withholding criticism or judgment when he fails, and offering praise when he succeeds, you have shown him that he can set a goal for himself and achieve it. By continuing to teach him how to manage his personal functions the way big kids and adults do, you are helping him achieve his greatest goal—increased independence and self-mastery.

In many ways, toilet-training success is not only a demonstration of all that your child has learned in a few short years of life, but also an indication of how he will overcome challenges and meet goals in the years to come.

Last Updated 11/2/2009

Source Guide to Toilet Training (Copyright © 2003 American Academy of Pediatrics)

The information contained on this Web site should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

[Back to Top](#)