



# Toilet Learning

Learning to use the toilet is an important step in your child's development, but just like learning to walk, your child will learn to use the toilet or potty when they are ready.

Each child will approach toilet learning in their own way and at their own pace. Most children are ready for toilet learning between 2-4 years of age.

Answer the questions below to see if your child is ready for toilet learning:

## Can your child:

- walk to the potty and sit on it without help? Yes  No
- pull their pants up and down? Yes  No
- have a dry diaper for 1-2 hours at a time? Yes  No
- follow 1 or 2 step instructions? Yes  No
- tell someone when they need to use the potty? Yes  No

## Is your child:

- interested in the potty or toilet? Yes  No
- willing to stop what they are doing to use the potty? Yes  No
- motivated to do things on their own? Yes  No
- eager to please caregivers? Yes  No
- willing and able to tell someone when they have an accident and help clean up? Yes  No

**If you answer 'yes' to most of the above questions, your child may be ready to start toilet learning.**

## Include toilet learning skills in everyday routines:

- encourage your child to dress themselves
- pretend your child's toys need to use the potty and act out the steps
- use paint to help your child practice wiping a plate clean
- read books about toilet learning with your child

## Try these tips!

- Transfer poo from diapers to the toilet to help your child understand what to do in the bathroom.
- Teach your child the appropriate words for body parts, pee, and poo. This will eliminate confusion or embarrassment.
- Make a toilet routine with your child. Talk about the routine, colour pictures to show each step, post the routine in your child's bedroom or bathroom.
- Prompt your child to use the toilet throughout the day (e.g. after waking up, after a meal or snack, before bed).
- Share your child's toilet learning goals and strategies with all caregivers (e.g. grandparents, babysitters).
- Use public washrooms with your child to help them get comfortable.
- Try using healthy rewards for using the potty (e.g. stickers).
- Praise your child's efforts and successes.
- Reassure your child if an accident happens.

## Remember:

- Things like moving to a new house or the birth of a sibling may cause your child's toilet learning to slow down or even go backwards.
- Pay attention to your child's toilet learning cues. Encourage and teach them when they are ready to learn.
- It may take longer for your child to stay dry during naps and all night.
- Make toilet learning fun!



**For more information on  
toilet learning, check out  
“My Toilet Learning” at  
[durham.ca/ChildDevelopment](https://durham.ca/ChildDevelopment)**



Durham Health Connection Line  
905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729  
**[durham.ca/ChildDevelopment](https://durham.ca/ChildDevelopment)**

Dial 311 (within regional limits)

