

Toilet Training For CF Toddlers

Toilet training can seem so very daunting for parents, but when you add cystic fibrosis (CF) into the mix, parents can feel overwhelmed at the thought of the whole process.

With the added food and fluid intake, and possible gut issues, which can mean increased trips to the bathroom, and for some children, runnier, smellier poos, you could be wondering, are we ever going to be able to toilet train our child?

But children with CF will gain control of their bladders during their toddler and preschool-age years just like children without CF. Bowel training sometimes occurs later in children who have CF because of large and frequent bowel movements, however, do not be too concerned if your child is not fully toilet-trained until age three or four years. Many parents have been pleasantly surprised at how easy it ended up being.

“For so long, I have dreaded potty training with CF, afraid the process would be long and hard and yuckier than normal. And yet, Bennett demonstrated to me...that, sometimes, fears can be worse than the thing itself” (Mum, ‘In it for Bennett’ Blog).

When Should Toilet Training Begin?

Toilet training should begin when your child shows clear signs that he or she is ready.



Most children show signs of bowel and bladder awareness between 18 months to two years, but most are not ready to learn to be toilet trained until they are two, and some not until they are three. Staying dry at night may also take some extra time. Complete night-time control may not occur until your child is four or five years old, or even older.

It is best not to start toilet training if the family environment is experiencing a significant change, such as the arrival of a new baby, moving house, having a hospital admission or starting day care. Try and delay commencing toilet training until things settle.

Your child is not ready if you are constantly having a battle to get them on to the toilet. If this is the case, stop everything and try again in a few months.

Signs of Readiness

- They know when they need to do a wee or poo.
- Their nappy is staying dry for longer periods (about two hours at a time).
- They are aware that they have had a bowel motion in their nappy.
- They show signs that they are uncomfortable when wet or dirty, such as pulling on their nappy.
- They take an interest in others using the toilet.

Getting Started

- Teach your child the words needed for toilet training such as wet, dry, poo, wee, 'it's coming'. Choose words you're comfortable with.
- Decide whether you will be using a potty or the toilet. If you are using the toilet you will need to purchase a small step. Because of the frequency that some children with CF need to go to the toilet, a potty close by to their main play area may be a good idea.
- Read books together on toilet training.
- Ensure your child wears clothes that are easy for them to remove.
- Show them how to use the toilet or potty. How to wipe, how to flush and how to wash their hands properly.
- Purchase 'grown up' undies. Plan a special shopping trip together.
- If your child has a usual time for bowel movements (such as after a meal), take your child to the toilet at that time of day.
- Praise and encourage every small step. Don't wait until they can do the whole task properly before praising them. Focus on the positive and ignore the negative.
- Remind your child to wash and dry their hands each time they use the toilet.

Reminders

- Toilet training is a difficult new skill to learn.
- Start toilet training when your child shows they are ready.
- Don't try to set a date by which you want your child trained; it puts pressure on both of you.
- Go at your child's pace and don't expect too much.
- If there are any setbacks, stop for a few weeks and then start again.
- Don't get into battles over toilet training. It needs to be your child's achievement that they can be proud of.
- Punishment has no place in toilet training.

Useful Resources

- [Continence Foundation of Australia](#)
- [Successful Toileting \(Ngala\)](#)
- [Toilet Training: A Practical Guide \(Raising Children Network\)](#)
- ['Potty Training'- Sister Fibrosis Blog](#)

Thank you to Anna Thetford, Clinical Nurse Specialist, Perth Children's Hospital, for input into this factsheet.

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