

## Potty Training—Is my child ready?

It is recommended to begin potty training between the ages of 18 months and 3 years. The average age most children become potty trained is two. So how do you know when it is time to begin the process? There are multiple indicators that provide parents clues about whether or not their child is ready to begin potty training. The following criteria are very important when considering potty training.

1. Your child is older than eighteen months. Typically, if the process is started too early it will take longer and you will probably experience setbacks.
2. Your family has not experienced any recent significant changes that have affected your child's routine nor will any major changes occur in the near future. Examples include having a new baby, moving, starting preschool or daycare, and divorce. If you are experiencing any acute stress, such as loss of a job, death in the family, etc. then it is not a good time to approach your child with learning a new skill.
3. Your child needs to understand certain words like "pee," "potty," and "poop" (or whatever you use to refer to a bowel movement). Other words that are good for a child to understand are "wet" and "dry."
4. Your child is cognitively able to understand and follow simple directions.

Other signs of readiness that varies from child to child are:

1. Your child is imitating other people's behavior. This is especially so if s/he is imitating an older sibling or parent going to the bathroom.
2. Your child expresses a desire to wear underwear.
3. Bowel movements occur with regularity and usually at the same time each day.
4. It is clear when your child is going to the bathroom. Your child may tell you this verbally or by making a face and/or noise or going to a special place.

When assessing your child's readiness for potty training it is wiser to follow your child's lead than to make the decision according to a timetable. When a parent captures the optimal window it only takes a short amount of time to potty train a child. Another important consideration is to not introduce any other new skill around the time your child is potty training. For example, moving your child to a big kid bed around the time your child is learning to go to the potty will be too overwhelming for him/her. Wait a good month after one skill is well established before moving on to the next developmental growth adventure.