



POTTY TRAINING

How do you go about it?

Engels



Opgroeien

Kind & Gezin

The Dutch-language version of this brochure can be found on the Kind en Gezin website.

1. USING THE POTTY IS AN IMPORTANT MILESTONE FOR A CHILD

Potty training is a natural development as well as a learning process. Your toddler gains control of the sphincter muscles and learns to understand what is expected. Although potty training may go smoothly for one child, it may take a little more time and effort for another. It is important to start early, so your child will have plenty of opportunities to practice.

You can support and **positively encourage** your child throughout this process. You do this **together**: parents, childcare, grandparents, etc. Everyone around your child is important in helping them potty train.

This brochure will help you with information, a roadmap and some tips. Do you have any questions or need any additional support? Sometimes you need to search for the best fit for your child. Have confidence, talk about it with other people raising a child or who are involved with children professionally or seek help.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Step by step, children gain more control over their bodies. This is necessary to start potty training.

- Babies urinate unconsciously and reflexively as soon as the bladder is partially filled. This happens up to 20 times a day. Bowel movements also happen naturally.
- Toddlers become aware of their bodies and develop a will of their own. They begin to consciously feel a full bladder. They notice when they pee or have a full nappy. These are signals to start potty training support. For most children, this is around 18 months of age.
- In the next phase, which usually starts from 2 years of age, children gradually gain 'control'. They can only hold pee and poo for a little while at first, and a potty should be quickly available. Gradually, they manage to wait for longer.
- Dry nights are the final step in development.

Positively supporting and encouraging potty training

A child needs time and opportunities to become potty-trained. How do you help with that? With calm encouragement, attention and by setting aside time. With plenty of opportunities to practise, both at home and in the childcare setting, and the idea that some accidents will happen. And especially with patience and trust. As a parent, you can make a difference for your child by inviting, encouraging and motivating it step by step.

2. BASIC TIPS FOR SUPPORTING YOUR TODDLER

Potty training is a **learning process**. With that in mind, give your child plenty of **opportunities to practise**.

- Help your toddler become aware of urination and bowel movements. If you see your child crouching, stopping play for a moment or looking for a quiet spot, changing facial expression, holding hands to buttocks, **mention** that your child is doing a pee or a poo.
- **Keep it fun, playful and relaxed.**
- Give your child **time** to learn. Have faith.
- **Take small steps:** your child may want to play with the potty first, then sit on it with clothes on for a while, finally with the buttocks exposed. (see also signs of maturity p. 4).
- Stay patient and don't expect any immediate results.
- Avoid pressure and don't punish them if they fail, as this is counterproductive.
- **Repetition and support is important.** Children learn through trial and error. This is how it becomes a familiar and recognisable action.

Work together to potty train your child

Potty training works best when parents, grandparents, the childcare setting, childminder or other people raising the child support them in the same way. From the start, agree together on how you want to handle it as a parent and coordinate with others who will be taking care of your child. Consult when you take the next step or when things get a little more difficult for a while.

3. SIGNS OF MATURITY – YOUR TODDLER IN THE 'SENSITIVE' PERIOD

Do you recognise any of these signs of maturity? Then your toddler is in the 'sensitive' period. Your child is then at their most open to being potty-trained. For most children, this is around 18 months of age. The roadmap on the next page will get you started!

UNDERSTANDING: YOUR CHILD CAN

- put objects where they belong, e.g. cubes in the box. Your child understands: pee belongs in the potty.
- understand sufficient language and follow simple directions. Your child understands the task: 'Come on, let's go to the potty.'
- come and tell you they feel something or interrupt play because your child is consciously experiencing that he or she has done or is doing something in the nappy.
- find a wet or dirty nappy unpleasant.

ABILITY: YOUR CHILD CAN ...

- regularly keep his or her nappy dry for extended periods of time, e.g. after the afternoon nap, the nappy is still dry.
- indicate that he or she needs to pee or poo.
- walk on their own, sit down independently and stand up again.
- raise or lower his or her pants by himself or herself or with some assistance.

WILLINGNESS: YOUR CHILD WANTS TO ...

- get rid of a wet or dirty nappy as soon as possible, because your child finds it annoying.
- know what happens on the potty or toilet – your child is curious.
- cooperate, show self-will (and sometimes say 'no').

4. ROADMAP FOR PEE AND POO DURING THE DAY

STEP 1: START EARLY

State what happens when you notice that your child is peeing or pooing or when you change the nappy. Do this from birth. This is how you help your child realise what is happening. Pooing and peeing are part of everyday life and are not dirty.

What is a good potty?

A potty where:

- your child can sit securely and comfortably
- both of your child's feet are supported on the ground
- the knees are level with the hips or slightly higher

If you want to use the toilet, you can do so with:

- a step so that feet can be supported

and

- a child seat so your child can be relaxed while sitting and has no fear of falling into the toilet.

STEP 2 PREPARING AND GETTING USED TO THE POTTY

When this step? You can start around the age of 18 months or earlier and when interested (see signs of maturity, p. 4).

As a parent, it is also good to prepare:

- Get hold of the necessary equipment: a good potty, underpants, comfortable clothes, etc.
- Make some time to practise when you start and fit it into your daily activities.
- Make arrangements with grandparents, the childcare setting and other people involved in raising your child about how and when you want to start potty training.
- Where can you find information or who can help you if you have any questions? (p. 12)

Observe and encourage your child

Children often give signs that they are ready to practise. If you anticipate that, you won't start too early, but you won't start too late either. Offer your child the potty and see how he or she responds. Is your child interested? Keep these practice moments playful and don't apply any pressure.

Encourage your child by:

- reading a book together about going to the potty. Be sure to check out your local library.
- watching videos about potty training.
- talking about potty training (pee, poo, the potty, the toilet, etc.) through conversation, songs, word games, etc.
- loading and unloading blocks or other objects. This helps with understanding the word 'in'. The blocks belong 'in' a box. Pee belongs 'in' the potty.
- mention and experience the difference between wet and dry, e.g. when changing nappies, doing the washing-up or when your child takes a bath. Tip: Put some underpants under the nappy so your child learns to feel whether he or she has peed or poed.

Getting used to the potty

- Put the potty in a highly visible and easily accessible place.
 - for children under 2, this can be done close to you (e.g. playing area, living room or kitchen).
 - children older than 2 often want a little more privacy, so put the potty in the bathroom or toilet.
- Let your child play with the potty.
- Talk about the potty and let your child go with you to the bathroom. This shows you where the toilet is, how you use it and what it is for.
- A teddy bear or doll on the potty can lead by example.
- Regularly invite your child to sit on the potty with the buttocks exposed, e.g. before your child takes a bath.

STEP 3: USING THE POTTY REGULARLY

When this step? When your child is familiar with the potty or around 2 years of age.

After practising for a while, your child will get used to the potty and he or she will be aware of what is expected. That makes this a good time to offer the potty at set recurring times. Regularity and predictability will make your toddler more cooperative.

Therefore, offer the potty at daily recurring times, such as:

- after getting up
- after eating (breakfast, lunch, snack and supper)
- before going to sleep

But also

- if your child asks for it themselves
- when you notice that your child needs to pee or poo (e.g. when he or she is jiggling around or pulling at their pants)

Practical details:

- Put some comfortable clothing on your child.
- A relaxed sitting position is necessary to urinate properly. Have your child sit with their legs slightly spread, with the underpants down to the ankles.
- Adding a book, talking a little, etc., will create a relaxed atmosphere.
- 2 to 5 minutes on the potty is sufficient.
- Choose 5 to 7 fixed potty times in the day.
- After a pee, wait 1.5 to 2 hours to offer the potty again. The bladder is more likely to be full again by then. Offering the potty again too soon can trigger forced urination behaviour.
- Is your child reacting anxiously or resisting violently? Then try to reassure them and give them confidence. If this fails, then pause for a few days and start again.

A few tips

- To the question 'Are you coming on the potty?', a toddler during toddler puberty might answer 'no'. Therefore, give some clear instructions instead, such as 'Come on, time for the potty!'.
- If you occasionally ask your child whether they need to pee, this will help your child pay attention to that feeling.
- Encourage with e.g. a 'well done!', a compliment, or sing a song after your child has been sitting on the potty for a while.
- Rewarding with a sticker or a cookie is unnecessary and may put unnecessary pressure on your child.
- Punishing them or getting angry will not help. On the contrary, it can put pressure and stress on your toddler, making it more difficult to potty train them.

STEP 4: NAPPY OFF

When this step? Watch your child's progress. This step may sometimes quickly follow step 3. This can be done from the age of 2 – sometimes earlier.

If your child's nappies regularly remain dry for an extended period of time (2 hours), or if you think your child is ready for it, you can leave the nappy off. Provide enough time in the first few days to monitor your child properly.

Practical details:

- You can either:
 - put underpants on your child. If your child feels wet pants, they are more motivated to hold in the pee.
 - have them walk around without a nappy or pants. This means your child will feel the pee running, which feels unpleasant.
- Have your child drink enough and regularly.
- Both at home and at the childcare setting, out and about, etc., keep to the set times.
- Also, leave the nappy off after an accident and when going out. Otherwise, it may be confusing for your child.

A few tips

- Consult with the childcare setting. Agree when to stop using nappies so that your child can be properly monitored at the childcare setting too.
- If the potty is in a fixed place, your child can easily find it.
- Underpants in a larger size will go on and off more easily.
- Accidents are part and parcel of potty training. Calmly put on some clean clothes without paying much attention to the accident and reassure your child.
- Rather not have a wet car seat or buggy? A waterproof pad, protector or plastic bag can help.

5. FEAR OF DOING A POO

Some toddlers may be anxious about making bowel movements on the potty. They can pee well on the potty, but wait to have bowel movements until they have a nappy on. Often, they then crawl away into a corner to do their business there quietly.

How best to respond?

- Your child will feel that he or she needs to make a bowel movement. This is positive. Encourage this and don't expect it to happen on the potty yet. It is very important that your child poos regularly and does not hold it in for days.
- Let your child find a quiet place. Place the potty there or put the potty in the toilet.
- Give your child time. After a few weeks, your child will also spontaneously poo on the potty.
- If you notice that this does not help, then you can incorporate the following steps:
 1. with nappy on the potty
 2. with a loose nappy on the potty
 3. put nappy open in the potty
 4. without nappy on the potty

Tips for hard bowel movements

- Encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids, preferably water. This will make the bowel movements softer.
- Feed your child plenty of fruit and vegetables.
- Have your child get plenty of exercise (walking, climbing, etc.).

6. BECOMING POTTY-TRAINED AT NIGHT

Night-time potty training usually comes naturally. There is not much you can do about this. It is mainly about maturity. If you notice that your child regularly has a dry nappy in the morning, you can leave the nappy off at night too.

Tips at a glance

- You can leave the nappy off if it stays dry at least 5 nights out of 7.
- Have your child drink normally throughout the day (even after 4pm).
- Wet nappies indicate that your child's body is not ready. Don't get angry if it doesn't work out: your child can't help this.
- Accidents will happen: a good mattress protector will come in handy.
- Don't wake your child up at night to pee. This will not help to potty train your child. When they are ready, children wake themselves up when they need to pee.

7. OCCASIONAL RELAPSES ARE POSSIBLE

When things happen that demand a lot from your child, such as a new baby, moving home or starting school, a temporary relapse is possible. Such a relapse will often happen with changes that require an adjustment from your child.

How best to respond?

- Give your child some time to get used to the new situation.
- Adjust your expectations. Realise why there is a momentary setback in your child's potty training.
- Re-arrange with the other caregivers (childcare setting/school/family/friends) how best to handle this.
- If you see no improvement after several weeks, get some help. (see p. 12)

8. SCHOOL AND POTTY TRAINING

A school may expect you to work on your child's potty training on time. Ideally, your child will be dry during the day before he or she starts school. This makes starting school easier and ensures that the school can focus on providing a good education for your child.

The school is not allowed to refuse your child because he or she is not yet potty trained. But your child will have more room to learn new things if he or she is. So get started in good time.

If your child is not yet potty trained when he or she starts school, make arrangements with the school about how you will continue to work on this together.

More information: onderwijs.vlaanderen.be > Ouders > Naar school > Naar de kleuterschool > Naar de kleuterklas vanaf 2,5 jaar

9. WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Read some more tips and watch our videos at kindengezin.be > ontwikkeling en gedrag > zindelijkheid



Do you have any questions, or need any help or advice?

- Talk to the nurse or doctor at Kind en Gezin about it; they can make an appointment for the parenting and child-rearing consultation session (spreekuur ouderschap en opvoeding).
- Call the Kind en Gezin Lijn (078 150 100) or chat via kindengezin.be > contact
- If your child is aged over 3, you can contact the CLB, for example during the contact in the first pre-school class.
- You can also ask your questions at the parenting store (Opvoedingswinkel) or at your Huis van het Kind.

When to consult a doctor?

Almost all four-year-olds are potty-trained during the day for urine and both day and night for bowel movements. Almost all five-year-olds are potty-trained during both the day and night for urine.

So consult a doctor if your child:

- still has frequent bowel movements or smudges in his or her underpants during the day if over 3.
- aged 4 to 5, is not yet dry during the day.
- aged 6 to 7, is not yet dry at night.