

Peaceful Toileting

*Developed and Presented by Katharine Edlin
Renaissance School . Fort Myers, FL
katharine@montessorichild.org*

Sensitive Period for Toileting (beginning at 12 and ending at 18-24 months):

A physical ability to hold and release bodily functions as well as an emotional awareness to the process. The myelination process is completed for the bladder and the bowels at this time and the nervous system is able to control the sphincter muscles. Children can control their toileting and allowing them to make connections early helps it be a peaceful process, prior to their need to exert their need for control. This age is a time when children are curious about what adults are doing and they have a strong desire to do as we do.

OPPORTUNITY:

Children can control 3 things during their first years:

- EATING
- SLEEPING
- TOILETING

So this is about OPPORTUNITY not CONTROL, this is about making the process natural and seamless from birth, adding expectations as they are developmentally ready.

Making the time is the most difficult aspect of the process, especially for parents. But consistent partnership is crucial during the sensitive period. This process is not the quick fix or “toilet train” in a day. As with any new learning process, consistency in handling, repetition, and time allow the appropriate neurons to fire and connect making this a lasting skill. And in the beginning, we must acknowledge that the process might take 30 minutes from start to finish. We are just gently responding to the child, preparing the environment and facilitating the appropriate capabilities of each child.

OBSERVATION

Observation will be key to the success of the process and should be the beginning of the process. At 12-15 months, children become more regular in their elimination. Look for facial expressions, location of elimination, demeanor of child when using the diaper. You are observing for patterns (time of day, after eating, how often, etc.) Making these connections and helping children become aware of elimination will allow the process to flow naturally.

Keeping a log is beneficial to be able to see patterns.

THE PREPARED ENVIRONMENT

- For infants, there should be a changing pad on the floor (cleaned in between uses)
- Small toilets if possible
- If adult toilet, then a wrap around stool will need to be provided that is secure and best to have toilet seat that has a small insert attached.
- Able to reach underwear or diaper (whichever is being used) *12-24 pairs at first
- Able to reach change of clothes (2-3 to choose from at any one time, replenished as necessary)
- Easy access to wipes (cloth preferable)
- Laundry basket or place for soiled underwear
- Trashcan
- Small stool to help child dress self
- Access to sink for washing hands
- Be flexible and willing to alter environment if the child is not successful or difficult for adult
- For car: suggest appropriate car pad (the one made by their carseat manufacturer)
- Baking Soda and vinegar work great to pull up urine

THE PROCESS:

1. Birth - Standing:

- Everything needed should be in arms reach.
- Cloth diapers encouraged and recommended, so that the child does not remain soiled for long periods and is immediately changed
- Constant eye contact should be made
- Child should be changed on a mat that is placed on the floor (not up high on a table). This encourages independence as the child can crawl to the area on his own.
- Use the Diaper Changing Roll Method (to reduce colic and strain on the spine)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l9IDpEVkemM>
- The changing space should remain in the same location for every change.
- Child should be informed about everything that is being done before it is done.
- The child should be encouraged to be an active participant when possible (i.e. touch the wipe, hold the diaper, etc.)
- Bowel Movements (BM) should be placed in the toilet
- Show and Tell the child where everything is going as you clean up.
- Rinse hands at the sink with a washcloth

2. Standing - Walking (or Wearing Underwear)

(Once the child is able to pull himself up into a standing position)

- Everything needed should be in arms reach
- Cloth diapers highly recommended
- Change the child in a place that they can securely hold on in the standing position. (best to have a mirror in front so the child can watch what is happening)
- The place for changing should be near the toilet and the same with every change.
- The child should be informed about everything that is being done before it is done.
- The child should be encouraged to be an active participant (i.e. push down pants, unsnap diaper, wipe, throw diaper in hamper/trash, etc.)
- BM is placed in the toilet with the child's help.
- Allow the child to watch you flush or help if possible
- Show and Tell the child where everything is going as you clean up.
- Have child wash hands at the sink using a stool with your support behind them

3. Walking (Wearing Underwear) - Peacefully Toileted

- The sensitive period for toileting is 12-18 months and underwear should be worn during this time.
- Set up the area so the child can reach everything he needs and consistently knows where to find items (choice of underwear, choice of clothing, wipes, toilet (stool if adult sized), soap for hand washing, etc.)
- Have the child take off diaper and sit on the toilet (with adult support). He may just attempt. If any distress or concern, thank him for trying and help off the toilet
- Provide a small stool to sit while putting on underwear. Show him how to slide each foot in a separate hole. Then stand up to pull up the underwear.
- Allow child to remain in underwear without pants in beginning (easily see when he urinates)
- Periodically (every 30 minutes in the beginning) INVITE the child to the toilet (when he is not engaged in an activity). Let the child know "it is time to use the toilet." Give the child a choice, "would you like to walk or crawl like a lion?" "Would you like to walk by yourself or would you like to hold my hand?" (*This is also done if you see the child is wet)
- Once in the toileting area, encourage the child to push down the underwear. If wet, ask the child do you feel that your underwear is wet. Empty BM into the toilet and let the child flush the toilet. Let the child put soiled underwear in the appropriate place.
- Invite the child onto the toilet (give choice of toilet when possible).
- If he uses the toilet and need toilet paper, encourage him to care for himself
- Let child know that you are going to help clean his body with a wipe (if needed)
- Invite the child to redress and chose the clothes and underwear he wants (give minimal assistance and encourage independence with the process)
- Invite the child to wash hands and follow this routine as he can on his own.

PEACEFUL TIPS

- a. Encourage Cloth Diapering. Find a local resource to administer a diaper delivery service at the school parent's ease.
- b. Do not ask yes or no questions and if you make the mistake, respect the no and ask again in a few minutes. (So instead of asking do you need to use the toilet?, say "it's time to use the toilet, which one do you want to use?")
- c. Use opportunities for natural motivation (i.e. we are going to use the toilet before going outside)
- d. Refrain from any NEGATIVE connotations (i.e. stinky, dirty, etc.)
- e. For all stages, become familiar with patterns and signs for each child (even in the beginning stages, if you notice a child beginning to have a BM, graciously take them to the toilet and help them undress and sit on the toilet to finish the process.
- f. Children urinate within 5-10 minutes of waking and eating
- g. Follow the Child
- h. Doctors are not encouraging parents to start until 3 and society offers parents so many ways to make their life easier (though it is to the child's detriment)
- i. Products that work well:
 - Prefolds and Thirstie diaper covers are easy cloth system
 - Best Bottoms Training Pants (<http://www.bestbottomdiapers.com/trainers.html>)
 - Joe Boxer Training Pants (www.sears.com) size 2T fits small 12 month olds (these fit snugly and very little leaks but more difficult to put on by self)
 - Gerber Training (cheap and easy to put on by self but leaks occur more often)

