

# TOILET TRAINING

## *The Intensive Method*

*Not every child* will need to be trained intensively, but there are times when intensive toilet training is appropriate, especially when daycare or preschool placement is in jeopardy. If you are willing to spend a lot of your time toilet training and are consistent about following the guidelines, your child can be toilet trained in a few days. A good time to begin intensive toilet training would be a weekend when you are free from work and other chores.

Before beginning toilet training, you want to be sure that you and your child are ready for the process. Please refer to the handout on Toilet Training: Preparation and Readiness for details.

1. **Increase fluids** – Give your child at least one cup of liquid to drink every hour during the day. Give tasty beverages that your child likes so that drinking so often doesn't become unpleasant. When your child needs to urinate frequently, he/she will have many opportunities to practice using the toilet.
2. **Give frequent prompts** – Remind your child every 15 minutes about using the potty when he/she feels the urge to urinate. Once your child starts to remember to use the potty most of the time, you need not give reminders as often.
3. **Check for dry pants** – Every 15 minutes, check your child's pants to see if they are dry. Again, you can cut down how often you check for dry pants once your child usually remembers to use the potty in time. Plan to have a system for rewarding your child for dry pants. For example, you can have a chart where you record each pants check, giving a star for each time you find dry pants. Then, you can reward your child for, say, every 10 stars he/she earns. Or, you can arrange to spend "special time" with your child in the evening after a day of dry pants. Special time means one parent spends 15 to 20 minutes with the child doing an activity the child particularly enjoys. Always follow-through on promised rewards.
4. **Praise** – Praise your child every time he/she uses the toilet, every time pants are dry when you check, and every time he/she remembers to go without your prompting.
5. **Use positive practice for wetting accidents** – The positive practice procedure involves having your child practice going to the bathroom 10 times immediately after each accident. Use the procedure every time your child has an accident.

### POSITIVE PRACTICE FOR TOILETING ACCIDENTS

**"Positive practice"** is an exercise that your child does when he/she has a wetting accident. Positive practice will teach your child to use the toilet. Your child must practice going to the toilet 10 times immediately after each wetting accident. Because positive practice takes some time and is boring, your child will quickly learn that using the toilet is better than doing positive practice.

Your child will be in charge of much of this activity, but as a parent you can make positive practice work best by remembering several important points:

- A. **Remain Calm** - Anger won't help your child learn to go to the bathroom. Remember, you will teach your child to use the toilet by having your child practice. Guide your child gently through the 10 practices if necessary, but without any discussion. Do not nag or threaten. Talk as little as possible.

- B. **Accidents** – Accept the fact that your child will wet his/her pants several times (and go through positive practice several times) before the problem is solved. In fact, the more often your child goes through the practice procedure, the more quickly you will get results.

### **THE PROCEDURE**

1. When you find that your child has wet pants, say in a matter-of-fact tone of voice that he/she has wet pants and will now have to practice. Ask your child, “Where do you go to the potty?” If your child does not answer right away, give the answer: “You go to the bathroom.”
2. Tell your child that before practicing, he/she will have to change the wet pants for dry ones. Go with your child to change pants and help him/her as necessary. Do not talk about the wetting accident. Begin positive practice immediately after the child has changed into dry pants.
3. Start by going to either the scene of the wetting accident (when known) or where your child was when you found the wet pants. Use this spot as your starting point. Take the child by the hand and calmly lead him/her to the bathroom. Help the child lower his or her pants, sit down on the toilet, get up, and pull the pants up. Then head back to the starting point.
4. Repeat this procedure until your child has made the trip from the starting point to the toilet 10 times. Try not to talk with your child during positive practice. You may, however, keep count of the practices for your child by saying something brief, such as, “Now do Practice Number 7.”
5. Your child may become angry or refuse to do what you tell him/her. If so, use your usual discipline to get your child to do the positive practice. If that approach does not work, contact the health professional who is helping your child stop the wetting accidents. That person may explain how to use time-out, which requires your child to sit in a chair until ready to do positive practices.
6. Almost every parent who has tried to follow the positive practice procedure has been tempted to cut the number of practices down to 5 or 6. Don’t give in. Do 10 practices every time you find your child has wet pants.
7. Whenever your child does use the toilet (instead of wetting his/her pants), be sure to praise your child or give him/her a small reward.

### **SUMMARY**

1. Make sure both you and your child are ready.
2. Increase fluids.
3. Frequently prompt your child about trying to go potty.
4. Check for dry pants frequently (every 15 minutes).
5. Expect accidents.
6. Use positive practice procedure after every accident.
7. Praise your child every time he/she does any part of the toileting behavior correctly.
8. Postpone toilet training for a few weeks if it isn’t going well or if you are getting tense about it.

Adapted in part from E.R. Christophersen (1988).

Recommended Reading: Azrin, N.H., & Foxx, R.M. (1974). Toilet training in less than a day. New York: Simon and Schuster.