

Toddler Toilet Training

-The Montessori Approach-

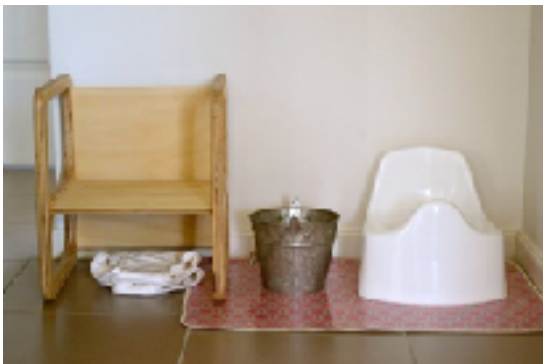


As teachers are often referred to as “guides” in the classroom, we want to think of ourselves as guides when helping our toddlers learn to use the toilet. This is not a forceful act or something that they are made to do on a timely schedule. Instead the child starts showing the parent/teacher when they are ready to toilet train through signs of readiness which can include:

- Desire or interest to sit on the toilet (even if they do not pee/poop)
- Awareness of body parts/function of body parts
- Telling you when their diaper is wet or when they have pooped
- Peeing/pooping occasionally on the toilet

Dr. Montessori termed the point in a child’s development when they are cognitively, emotionally, and physically capable of learning a skill a “sensitive period”. During these periods a child can more easily and naturally master a new concept than at any other point in their development.

If your child is showing the signs above, it is very likely that they are in the sensitive period for toilet training which Montessori observed begins at 18 months. Because of this sensitive period, it is important that we watch for signs of readiness and act on them when they occur to facilitate the easiest transition into using the toilet.



-Toilet Training at Home-

Once you've observed the signs of readiness, begin having your toddler start using the toilet as part of your everyday routine at home. This may begin by having your toddler sit on the toilet when they wake up in the morning and sitting on it at night before bedtime. By making it part of the routine, toddlers know what to expect and become more comfortable and familiar with toilet training very quickly. To help your toddler conquer this large task and feel more confident doing so, it is important to offer a toilet that is on the floor that they can get on and off of independently, or safe steps up to an adult sized toilet if preferred. Also consider the child's clothing- do their pants have tricky clasps or buttons that they are not able to do/undo independently? It is helpful to have toddlers in loose, elastic waist band shorts/pants when toilet training to help them be as independent in the process as possible.

A large part of the Montessori philosophy is based around respect of all people, and treating humans as capable beings. This means the language that we use when talking about toilet training is positive, respectful and factual. Some phrases that we use in the classroom that can be incorporated into toilet training at home may include the following:

- "Your pants are wet. Lets go change them."
- "You peed in the toilet. Just like mom and dad do."
- "Would you like to sit on the toilet?"
- "Let's try standing to change your diaper since you are so stable now."
- "Can you help me pull down your pants please?"

After introducing toilet training at home, you may question when your child is ready to move out of diapers and into underwear. Some signs of readiness for underwear include:

- Diaper staying dry for longer periods of time
- Ability to push down and pull up pants
- General interest in the toilet
- Regularly using the toilet with success

As your child transitions into underwear, it may be helpful to have them only wear underwear (no pants) when at home. By doing so, they have on less layers that are likely to get wet and notice their bodily functions much quicker/easier. When leaving the house with a toddler who is toilet training, it is important to bring extra pairs of underwear, pants, wet wipes, and bags for wet clothing. Having your child routinely try sitting on the toilet sets them up for success, rather than waiting for them to tell you they need to go or waiting until it is too late.



-Toilet Training at School-

We are here to help toddlers succeed with toilet training when we feel they are ready. This will mean conversations between teachers and parents about whether the toddler is showing interest in using the toilet at home, etc. When the parents and teachers feel the toddler is ready to transition to underwear, we ask parents to send in many extra pairs of underwear and pants, as accidents will occur for the first few days/weeks. Toddlers often have accidents and this is not something we ever treat in a negative way, instead you will hear us say something like, “Oh look, your pants are wet. Lets go change them.” Toddlers at school use a toilet that is their size, get changed standing up, are asked to help with the dressing and undressing process, use a mirror in the bathroom so they can see themselves and their body parts, and are always asked to flush the toilet and wash hands. We have specific times of day when we do toileting with toddlers, and those times are more frequent when a child is just starting to wear underwear (usually every 45 minutes to 1 hour).

Many parents will find that their toddler isn't ready to move to underwear but is showing some signs of toilet interest/readiness so they decide to move their toddler into pull-ups. We find that pull-ups are no different than diapers, except for the fact that they may not open on the sides. Pull-ups absorb liquid the same way diapers do, leaving the toddler less aware of their bodily functions. Therefore, we ask that your toddler continues in diapers until they begin showing signs of toilet readiness and make the move directly into underwear.

If you have questions about toilet training or need more guidance, we are always here to help and support in any way we can. There are also some helpful links and books (which will soon be available in our Toddler Parent Library) for more information on toilet training.



Helpful Resources:

Diaper Free Before Three by Jill M. Lekovic

Toilet Awareness by Sarah Moody

<https://www.mother.ly/child/how-to-potty-train-the-montessori-way?rebelltitem=8#rebelltitem8>

<http://www.howwemontessori.com/how-we-montessori/toilet-learning/>

<http://www.thekavanaughreport.com/2018/06/beginning-toilet-learning-montessori.html>