

TOILET TRAINING:

WAITING UNTIL THE CHILD IS READY

The task of toilet training seems of great concern to most new parents. It is relatively easy to accomplish if it is put in the proper perspective, and if the parents' preoccupation with success is not transmitted to the child. The most important advice is to wait until the child is both physically and psychologically ready. The child should also be willing to be trained. Toilet training is then best accomplished by allowing the child to develop good bladder and bowel habits at his own pace. The nerve development and control of both the bladder and bowel progresses so that first the child learns to retain stool and urine; only later does he learn to spontaneously release them. The latter is usually accomplished by 24 months of age. Any attempt at toilet training should always be pleasant and relaxed. It should be started when the child expresses readiness and interest. Early success does not indicate a "good parent" or a "good child," but it does represent a child who is ready to be trained. Force should never be used in an attempt to teach toilet training. "Breaking" a child suggests force and is definitely a mistake. Most children will be toilet trained by 3 years of age.



BEGINNING TOILET TRAINING

Timing is extremely important, and parents will be able to judge when their child is ready for training. This is between 18 and 24 months; usually closer to 24 months. Sometime after the age of 18 months, one begins to introduce the child to either the "potty chair" or "potty seat" as his very own. He can become familiar with it by sitting on it while still wearing clothes. The child should never be forced to use it if he shows no interest. If rebellion occurs, stop all activity for the present and begin again at a later date. Next, the child uses the chair or seat without clothes or diaper. During this period, teach him to communicate to you about the activity taking place. This is especially true when you are changing the baby's clothes after a failure, or as they follow you to the bathroom where they are made familiar with the process.

Learning by example, demonstration, explanation, and experience are methods used to teach your children toilet training at this time. Success slowly follows. Children should be rewarded with a kind word of praise. They should, however, never be scolded, ridiculed, or punished for failures.

Nap and night training gradually follow and normally are not problems. Bed wetting has nothing to do with toilet training.