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## **Steps in toilet training**

### **Encourage practice runs to the potty.**

A practice run (potty sit) is encouraging your child to walk to the potty and sit there with her diapers or pants off. You can then tell your child, "Try to go pee-pee in the potty". Only do practice runs when your child gives a signal that looks promising, such as a certain facial expression, grunting, holding the genital area, pulling at her pants, pacing, squatting, or squirming. Other good times are after naps, after two hours without urinating, or 20 minutes after meals. Say encouragingly, "The pee (or poop) wants to come out. Let's use the potty".

If your child is reluctant to sit on the potty, you may want to read her a story. If she wants to get up after one minute of encouragement, let her get up. Never force your child to sit on the potty. Never physically hold your child on the potty. Even if your child seems to be enjoying it, end each session after five minutes unless something is happening. Initially, keep the potty chair in the room your child usually plays in. This easy access markedly increases the chances that she will use it without your asking. Consider buying two potty chairs.

During toilet training, children need to wear clothing that makes it easy for them to use the potty. That means one layer, usually the diaper. Avoid shoes and pants. (In the wintertime, turning up the heat is helpful.) Another option (though less effective) is loose sweatpants with an elastic waistband. Avoid pants with zippers, buttons, snaps, or a belt.

### **Praise or reward your child for cooperation or any success.**

All cooperation with practice sessions should be praised. You might say, for example, "You're sitting on the potty just like Mommy," or "You're trying real hard to go pee-pee in the potty." If your child urinates into the potty, you can reward him with treats, such as animal cookies, or stickers, as well as praise and hugs. Although a sense of accomplishment is enough to motivate some children, many need treats to stay focused. Reserve big rewards (such as going to the toy store) for occasions when your child walks over to the potty on his own and uses it or asks to go there with you and then uses it.

Once your child uses the potty by himself three or more times, you can stop the practice runs. For the following week, continue to praise your child often for using the potty. (Note: Practice runs and reminders should not be necessary for more than one or two months.)

### **Introduce underpants after your child starts using the potty.**

Underwear can increase motivation. Switch from diapers to underpants when your child is cooperative about sitting on the potty chair and has passed urine into the toilet spontaneously 10 or more times. Take your child with you to buy the underwear and make it a reward for his success. Buy loose-fitting underpants that he can pull down easily and pull up himself. Once your child starts wearing underpants, use diapers only for naps, bedtime, and travel outside the home.