

## POTTY TRAINING TIPS

After double or triple diaper duty, most parents of multiples long for the day when their children are finally potty trained. Parents of multiples typically change over 100 diapers per day in the beginning. Diapering doesn't get any easier as multiples grow older even though the quantity may be less. Diaper change time often becomes a power struggle with toddlers as they try to wriggle or walk away. It's no wonder that parents look forward to the end of diaper days!

The big question is how early should parents start potty training? Most experts agree that toilet training should not begin before age two. Children typically can't control bowel and bladder muscle function before 18-24 months of age and some children may not be neurologically ready until after age three. Potty training can't be rushed and is a challenge that children must be physiologically and psychologically prepared for. Parents need to take cues from their children regarding readiness. Some of the signs include signaling to parents that a diaper change is needed as they become aware of the discomfort caused by a soiled diaper. Children must also be old enough to have a vocabulary so that they can express the need for a bowel movement or urination.

Girls are typically ready to begin potty training earlier than boys. This could create a dilemma for parents of boy/girl multiples. Should they wait until each child is ready or begin training the girl first? There are pros and cons to training multiples separately. Teaching them separately means less accidents to deal with at one time but this could also draw out the process. Toilet training multiples at the same time can be fun since sitting on potty chairs can be viewed as party time. Yet, some parents may not have this option if one child would really like to try sooner than their sibling(s).

There are several guidelines that parents can follow once their children indicate they are ready to be potty trained. Listed below are tips that can help make the entire process easier for both parents and kids:

- Purchase potty chairs and leave them in the bathroom so that children associate that room with going to the toilet.
- Dress children in easily managed clothes such as shorts or pants with elastic waistbands. This will allow them to pull down their own clothing when they are ready to use the potty.
- Do not force children to sit on the potty for any length of time since this can create stress and cause them to rebel against the entire process.
- Praise children when they go on the potty. Reinforce successes with treats such as stickers.
- Never punish or ridicule if children resist potty training. It's best to try again in another few weeks.
- Expect accidents and never make a big deal out of them. Some parents find it helpful to use pull-up training pants at night since they provide extra protection.
- Motivate children for final success with a promise of "real kids underwear" after they have been dry for a certain number of days.
- Keep in mind that bowel movement training comes later. Parents may be able to facilitate the learning process by allowing children to observe them putting the contents of soiled diapers in the toilet to show where they belong.

Finally, parents should keep in mind that potty training is a process and requires learning. Regressions are common especially during significant family events such as the birth of a sibling, illnesses, or vacations. It's important for parents to keep their sense of humor and have a lot of extra clean clothes on hand!

### Sources:

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