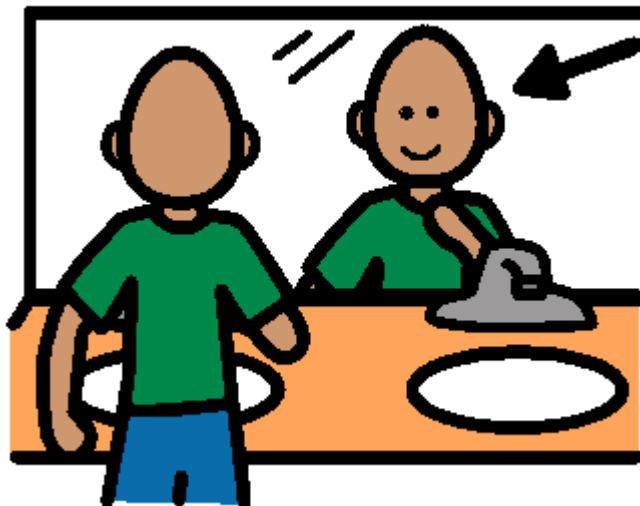




States of Guernsey
Children and Family
Community Services

Children's Occupational Therapy

Self Care



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How can I Help My Child with Toilet Training

Many children find toilet training difficult. Some learn quickly, while others can take longer. It is not uncommon for children to slip back occasionally after they have made good progress. Children learn better when they are not anxious, so although it can be frustrating, especially when out and about, try to keep calm.

When to begin potty training?

All children are different, but a good guide that they are ready to become toilet trained is if they:

- can remain dry and clean for two hours or more
- are aware when they are emptying their bladder or bowels
- show an interest in sitting on a potty or toilet
- have a regular pattern to when they wet or soil their nappy.



How to prepare for potty training?



- A good way to prepare is to start a toilet chart to see how often your child might need to use the potty. A quick feel of the nappy at regular intervals will tell you if it is wet or soiled.
- It may take a week or two before you spot any pattern in the chart. If you do – for example your child’s nappy is usually wet between 12 and 2pm – you could try to ‘catch’ that wet nappy by introducing ‘potty time’ just before that time.
- If no pattern emerges, you could start to “try for a wee on the potty” before lunch or bath time.
- The traditional routine in nursery and school is for children to be asked to go to the toilet and wash their hands before morning break, lunch time and before the end of the day. This is a good routine to aim for.
- Decide whether to start using a potty or to begin directly using the toilet. If you decide to use the toilet, a special seat to reduce the size of the seat may be helpful.
- Choose a rewarding activity for you and your child to do while they are sitting on the potty. For example, looking at a book or picture or listening to nursery rhymes or a story CD.



How long should my child stay on the potty?

- Make sure you have plenty of time and do not rush your child. Give them time, but do not keep them there so long they get bored –ten minutes at the very most.
- Talk to your child about what you are doing. For example, say that “we are waiting for a wee-wee”. Games and activities that involve blowing, such as bubbles and whistles, will naturally encourage the stomach pushes needed to go to the toilet. A running tap might also be helpful.
- When your child is successful, use your chosen activity as a reward. For example, give them a new book to read on the potty, or a new picture to pin up on the wall.
- Gradually increase how often you have potty time. It is a good idea to start trying two hours before and two hours after a time that seems to be successful.

Should my child wear training pants?

- Training pants are like a nappy with an elasticated waistband. They are less tight-fitting than a nappy and are easier for both you and your child to pull up and down. Although many children can move straight from nappies to pants.
- You can start using training pants at any stage once you have begun potty training. A good time to start is when you have one successful potty time every day.

Other tips to consider with toilet training...

- Children may be more aware that they are wet or soiled if they are wearing pants and loose fitting clothes rather than nappies.
- Remember, all children are different. Some need to use the potty more often than every two hours and others may be able to wait three hours or more but then need to go urgently.
- You will need to rely on your instinct and knowledge of your child to come up with a potty training plan that suits them.

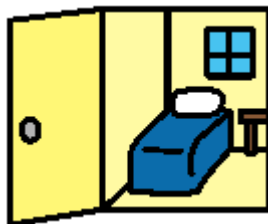


Establishing Good Sleep Hygiene

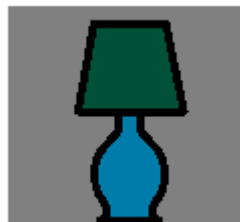
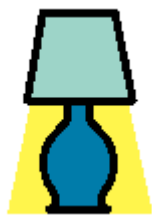
Environmental Variables

After examining your child's sleep environment more closely, there may be some adaptations and modifications needed to assist your child's ability to relax at bedtime.

- Consider whether your child is too hot or too cold. Assess the temperature of the room, bedding and sleep clothes to decide what combination is best for your child. Remember that your child's sense of temperature may be different than your own. Recall what temperature your child seems to prefer and/or seek during the day, and consider when making decisions.
- Consider tactile sensitivities that may be affecting your child's ability to sleep. Certain textures can relax or arouse your child. Look at bedding and pyjama textures. Your child may prefer his/her feet covered or uncovered with footed pyjamas, socks and or even the covers themselves. How tight or loose the clothing fits, and whether or not there is elastic or seams can be an issue for some children. Also bedding should provide the optimum level of pressure, as this too can affect individuals with autism spectrum disorders.



- Consider noises and how they affect your child. At night, when trying to relax and fall asleep, the noises your child hears may be overpowering and impossible for the child to filter out. These noises, such as water running or an animal scratching may not affect you or other household members but can be disrupting for a child with an autism spectrum disorder. Can certain household noises be monitored for the effect on your child? Sometimes a fan, air filter, TV or soft music in the child's room can help mask other noises and provide a consistent sound that is comforting and/or soothing for the child.
- Also consider visual stimuli that may be causing problems for your child at bedtime. Is your child afraid of the dark? Some children with autism spectrum disorders may seem to prefer dark places during the day but that is different than being expected to sleep in a big room in a bed at night in the dark. Streetlights, the moon, or car lights shining in the room at intermittent intervals may be affecting your child's sleep. Providing a room that is consistently light or dark may be very important, depending on your child's needs.



Bedtime Routines

Bedtime routines and rituals are very important for most children in establishing positive sleep patterns, but are also essential for children with an autism spectrum disorder.

- Your child will benefit from a set bedtime. Pick a time for bed that is reasonable for your child and which you can consistently provide.
- Children with an autism spectrum disorder need to know what is going to happen next. Establish a bedtime routine that can provide predictability and a comforting, familiar pattern. For further understanding and structure, a visual bedtime schedule can help. The visual schedule can provide reminders and consistency for the whole family.
- A good bedtime routine will help teach a child to calm down, relax and get ready to sleep. For example, if bathing is stimulating or frightening for your child, even though you may want him/her to bathe before bed, it may be best to bathe at a completely different time of the day. Likewise, there may be sensory integration activities that have proven to be relaxing to your child during the day that you can also use as part of the bedtime routine.



- A bedtime routine should be the same every day and should include activities that are pleasant and relaxing as well as special and individualized to fit your child's needs and interests. A bedtime routine should realistically consist of 4 to 6 steps that do not take more time than is reasonable on a nightly basis.
- Some activities to consider as part of a bedtime routine or ritual include looking at the same book or story each night, saying goodnight to favourite objects, toileting, bathing, getting pyjamas on, brushing teeth, having a glass of water, singing a favourite song or prayer, listening to calming music that the child enjoys, hugging and kissing family members and/or engaging in a calming sensory integration activity.
- On days when you are away from home and/or get home late, it is still important to follow bedtime routines and rituals. You can shorten each step significantly and potentially eliminate nightlong frustrations due to the change. If your child is away from home for a night or two you may see old sleeping patterns emerge. Even in a temporary new environment, routines may help. Upon returning home the bedtime routine will continue to be effective, though the excitement from the change may take a night or more to fade depending on your child and how long you have been away.



Helping my child get dressed

Encouraging your child to get dressed can sometimes feel like a struggle, but it needn't be. There are a lot of simple tips and techniques you can try to help your child learn how to dress themselves.

Make sure getting dressed doesn't feel like a chore. Keep it fun and allow plenty of time so that our child is not rushed. Playing dressing up games is a good way of helping your child to learn the right skills at their own pace.



Children generally develop dressing skills in the following order:

2-3 years

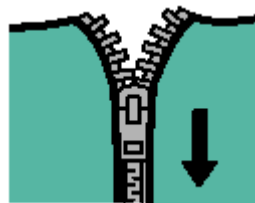
Most children can remove their hat, gloves and socks and can push down and pull up pants. They can remove an unbuttoned coat and undo zips and poppers at the front.

3-4 years

By this age many children can put on their shoes, although often on the wrong feet! They can pull up socks and put on a coat and gloves. Many can button and unbutton large and medium-sized front buttons, pull up zips, fasten front poppers and unbuckle belts and shoes.

4-5 years

Most children can now get undressed by themselves, join and fasten front zippers, buckle shoes and belts, begin to tie laces, and should be able to easily recognise the front and back of most items of clothing.



Helping your Child Learn to Dress



There are a lot of simple tips and techniques you can try to help your child learn how to dress themselves:

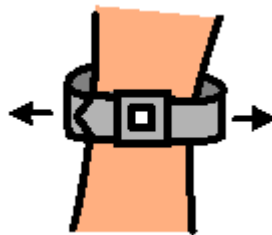
- Give lots of praise for practicing skills, even if they are not always successful.
- Start with undressing, this is easier and you will have more time than in the morning, although remember your child may be tired.
- Try to follow the same sequence when dressing and place clothes in an ordered pile, for example from head to toes.
- Take it one step at a time, and give help where needed with other steps. For example, your child may be able to place their shoes on their feet, but may need you to fasten the Velcro straps.
- Try not to watch all the time, children may try more when left alone.
- Rather than automatically correcting mistakes, ask your child to look (maybe in a mirror) and feel if it is correct – then encourage them to identify and sort out what needs to be done. For example, a t-shirt needs pulling down or shoes ‘feel wrong’ because they are on the opposite feet.



Different Approaches

There are several approaches you could try to encourage your child to dress:

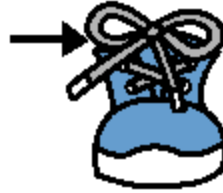
1. Your child could start the task and then you help with the later stages that they cannot manage. For example, your child pulls their socks over their toes and you pull them up over the heel.
2. Your child could have the reward of finishing the task by completing the last step after you have started it. For example, you pull their socks over their toes and just over their heel, and they can pull them up their leg.



Types of Clothing

- You can make it easier for your child by giving them loose fitting, lightweight clothing with wide neck holes and sleeves.
- Avoid lots of layers and difficult fastenings. Cuffs that are elastic, or have a button attached with elastic are good, so that they stretch open when put on.
- Use elastic waistbands on trousers and clothes that fasten with zips or Velcro if buttons and buckles are difficult.

HOW TO TIE SHOELACES



Suggestions:

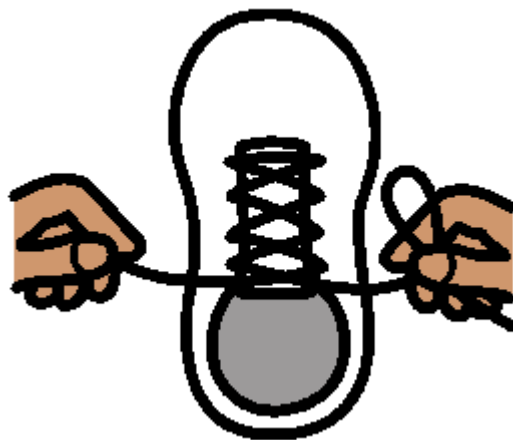
Use different laces, i.e. one half of lace black and the other half green. Practice doing up dolls ribbons, tie belts round waist.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE TYING OF SHOELACES

- Provide the child with different coloured shoe laces.
- Allow him to practice with the shoe in his lap before expecting him to tie the laces with his foot in the shoe.
- Demonstrate the activity from a position next to him, not opposite as the actions are easier to copy from this position.
- Ensure the child is sitting correctly on a stable, firm chair. (Hips, knees and ankles should be ideally at 90°). Or the child should be seated in a supported manner on the floor.
- Elevate the foot with the shoe on to a low surface, to improve their vision of the laces that are being tied and to reduce the distance that they have to bend down to reach their laces.
- Use shortened laces to encourage the child to pull the laces tighter and to make it easier for them to handle.
- Break down the process into steps, ensuring that they master one step before moving on to the next.
- Allow the child to start the activity while an adult completes it. More steps should be given to him to do independently until they are able to tie their own shoelaces.

Tying Process:

1. Make sure they tie the lace over the other lace TWICE before they begin to make bows, otherwise the knot will come loose and the bows will fall apart.
2. Make a loop with one piece of lace (call this the 'tree').
3. Wind the other piece of lace (the 'rabbit') around the 'tree' (loop) and through the hole.
4. Take hold of the rabbit and the tree and make one quick hard tug movement away from each other.



How to Help My Child to Use Cutlery....



Things to consider:



- A good sitting position at the table is important. The child should be at the right height in relation to the table with their feet supported, for example, with a stool under their feet.
- Check that the plate is in front of the child, and is not likely to slip around; a placemat can help with this.
- Have the right tools for the job! A serrated knife is easier for cutting meat and other tough textures, while a non-serrated knife is easier for spreading butter on bread.
- Ensure the cutlery is the correct size for the child. Child-sized or cutlery with wider handles is easier to hold and use. Junior Caring Cutlery (available from www.amazon.uk) has shaped handles that promote appropriate hand placement.
- Look at how the child is holding their knife and fork. Their hands should be pointing down towards the plate. To increase the pressure they can apply when cutting show them how to point their index fingers down the shaft of the knife and fork.
- If the child is right-handed, they should hold their knife in their right hand. If the child is left-handed, allow them to choose which hand to hold their knife in.

Try the following:

- Practice using a knife and fork during a fun activity to avoid frustration. Let the child try to cut Play-Doh or cookie dough.
- Teach one step at a time; let the child master one step before attempting the next, i.e.
 - stab Play-Doh balls with the fork
 - saw backwards and forwards with the knife
 - use the knife and fork together.
- Try guiding the child's movements by placing your hands over theirs while cutting. This allows the child to feel the necessary movements for cutting

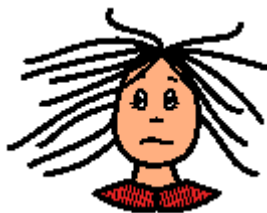


My child does not like having their hair cut...



- Massage head and give deep pressure input to the head and shoulders prior to the appointment or allow 15 min of indoor swinging (linear movement only).
- If you are trained, complete the Wilbarger Protocol prior to the appointment.
- Some parents have had success cutting their child's hair in the bath – albeit more challenging for the parent. The water provides all round deep tactile input and makes for a great distraction!
- Liaise with the hairdresser /barber prior to the appointment about your child's needs. Find one that will work with your child and be as patient and as gentle as possible (even if “bribed” with a bigger tip). Once you find one that works – STICK with them at all costs.
- Go at the child's pace and comfort level. Do not force it... take baby steps.
- Make sure your child has control over how often he needs to have the hair brushed off his neck and face and powder or a cool blow dryer. This is often the most disturbing aspect of hair cutting.
- Make sure the hair is wet so less hair falls on your child's face and neck.

- Wash hair at home, not at the barber/hairdresser, so that he doesn't have to tip his head back. Have Mom/Dad or your child spray water on his head to cut so he feels safer.
- Make sure the hairdresser does not have long nails that may bother your child if scratched or touched by them.
- Practice at home and find out which feels better... a buzzing/vibrating haircutting tool or scissors. Buzzing is quicker and may feel better. Give your child earplugs though if the buzzing noise bothers them. Get them used to vibration on their head through play with different toys that vibrate.
- Allow your child to wear a fun "visor-type" hat (example animal ones) right above the eyebrows to catch any hair that may fall. You can also give them a towel to wipe their own face and allow them to do so as things bother them.



- Make sure they have a mirror to hold and see themselves in. Let them see all things going on and make sure they have verbal cues prior to any movements or cutting action. Or, if the lights are too bright in the salon/barber shop, let them wear sunglasses.
- Use firm brush or comb strokes and press down on top of the head and shoulders while getting the haircut.
- If cutting at home, do it in the bathtub so that hair can be rinsed off immediately.
- Support and prepare your child through the use of Social Stories (refer to Carol Gray's social stories format <http://carolgraysocialstories.com/social-stories/>)



My child hates having their hair brushed...

- Use gentle yet firm brush strokes and try sitting your child in front of a mirror so they can see what is happening.
- Try using a song or rhyme as you brush. Finish brushing when the song ends so that your child knows how long the task will take.
- Try using a good detangling conditioner or detangling spray. Some hair brushes such as 'Tangle Teezer' seem to glide more easily through hair. And keep hair shorter if your child really dislikes hair brushing.
- Stickers or reward charts might be helpful.
- Keep it fun. Play 'hairdressers' with your child, where they brush and style your hair too, and encourage your child to brush their toys' hair.



My child dislikes tooth brushing...

- Reading your child stories or showing them books that feature tooth brushing or pictures of the sequence of brushing may be helpful.
- Ensure that your child is sat or standing securely while they are brushing their teeth.
- Different children prefer different flavours of toothpaste so try a different variety. You could also try different types of toothbrush. A rubber type of brush such as Nuk may be helpful initially and character toothbrushes may be more motivating for some children.
- Let your child brush their own teeth for part of the routine.
- Keep it fun and encourage your child to role-play 'brushing' a toy's teeth or your teeth.
- Reward charts may be helpful.
- Have a visual timer or sing a favourite song for the duration of the task, to let your child know how long brushing will take.



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