

## **Suggestions for Toileting**

*From the Forest Bluff School Directors*

### **Indirect Preparation for Toileting**

From birth, change your child's diaper as soon as it is wet so they do not learn to get used to a wet sensation against their skin. This can sometimes mean as often as every hour.

Using cloth diapers from the beginning helps in developing awareness because your baby will feel wet immediately. This immediate feedback helps your child make a connection between the urge to urinate and the wetness that results from releasing their muscles. This way, toilet training occurs gradually, over time.

When your child begins pulling up to standing, let them stand during diaper changes. Talk about what you're doing, even involving them where you can. This way, they can see what is happening and will consider themselves a participant in the process.

If you haven't done so already, move diaper-changing to the bathroom when your child starts to stand and walk. This helps them make the appropriate associations between action and location.

### **When to Begin Toileting**

The sensitive period for toilet awareness occurs between twelve and eighteen months.

Begin when your child is walking, because this is a sign that the myelination in the brain is ready for awareness and control of the groin to begin.

Look for signs of readiness:

- An interest in cycles (Bib goes in the hamper, hamper goes to the basement, bib goes into the machine, etc. Child watches with interest and even follows along).
- Child is walking.
- You notice your child touches her/his genitals.
- Child begins to have bowel movements at certain times of day.

Sometimes a child exhibits none of these signs but will become interested as soon as you begin to draw their attention to toileting, so we still recommend beginning by 18 months.

## Equip for Toileting Success!

To get started, purchase 20-30 pairs of **thick underpants**. We recommend Gerber training pants because they are absorbent, durable, and not too expensive. For success, the leg holes must be large enough and the underwear loose enough that they can be pulled up and down without too much effort on the child's part. We recommend size 3 in the Gerber training pants for a child between 12 and 18 months.

- Put a piece of **rubberized flannel** in the car seat.
- Be sure you have many pairs of **pull-on pants** for your child, as they may need to change frequently.
- Put away your nice rugs.
- Purchase **Nature's Miracle** to quickly and effectively clean rugs or the floor when necessary. This product removes the stain and the smell and is safe for rugs.
- Set out small **potties**, a variety if necessary, and encourage the child to sit on them, praising when they do. Our favorite is the Baby Bjorn potty. There are two sizes. Both are useful, but the smaller one is even easier to clean and transport. (Using potty chairs, rather than the real toilet, helps your child in two ways: They can be more independent and feel more secure; and they can more clearly see their results – waste in the potty – afterwards).
- Place a potty in each bathroom with a **small bucket** to the left and a **small basket of clean underwear** on the right. A folded towel or bath mat under the three items creates a non-slip surface and an organized appearance.
- When you start night-time toileting, have plenty of **bed sheets** so you can change them often and buy pieces of **rubberized flannel** to lay under where they sleep.

## Once you Begin Toileting

These first three points are the most important, because they have to do with drawing your child's attention to this part of our daily lives:

1. Let them see you and other family members sitting on the toilet as much as you can.
2. In the beginning, take your child to the toilet every half-hour or so and encourage them to sit on it while you sit on the adult toilet (Just for a moment, as would be natural). Doing this helps your child to learn through the *experience* of using the toilet, and this works much better than asking your child, "Do you need to go to the bathroom?" which usually gets a "No!" even when they do need to go!
3. It is very important that your child change into dry underwear immediately after wetting it. We want them to be used to the feeling of dryness, and to respond right away to wetness.

### *At Home*

- Throw out all diapers when you begin this toileting stage. Your child needs to be set up for success and sense our confidence that, eventually, they will be able to use the toilet every time.
- In the early stages, set up a potty in whatever room your child is playing in so they can see it and get to it in time.
- Many children sleep too deeply to wake and use the toilet until they are older. There are different ways to handle this, depending on your child, their age, and the stage you've reached in toileting. Talk to your child's director about what will work for your family and situation.

### *Clothing*

- In the early stages, your child can wear just their underwear from the waist down, so that using the potty and changing is simple and doesn't take long. When they do wear pants, only use those that are easy to pull up and down themselves.
- Continue to involve your child in dressing and undressing.

### *Toileting Routine*

- Timing is key with getting bowel movements into the toilets! If you notice that your child has a bowel movement around the same time each day, make it a routine time to go to the bathroom together and sit on the toilets. You can even read books together to pass the time if that works.
- If your child is irregular in their timing, watch them carefully and take them to the toilet immediately if they go in their underpants, so you can help them change, watch the BM go into the toilet, and flush it down.
- If your child urinates in their toilet, show them that you are putting the urine into the larger toilet and flushing. Then collaborate in redressing, giving special attention to helping them learn to put dry underwear on independently.

### *Out and About*

- Make it a habit to sit on the potty before leaving the house and upon returning. You can say, "We all sit on the toilet for a moment before going out and when we come home." (Just get them to sit for a moment. If they pop back up or don't urinate, just move on. Eventually, they will figure out how to use this opportunity.)
- During the early stages of toilet training, bring a potty with you (to use at your destination) when you take your child out in the car. You can place it in the bathroom of the house you are visiting, even if it is just a short stay. This helps set the routine of going to the bathroom upon leaving the house and upon arriving at destinations. You can do this in public places, as well.
- For special events or plane rides, we encourage you *not* to put your child back into a diaper, but rather, put a Nikki diaper wrap over their underwear. Made of soft waterproof fabric, this diaper cover allows you to still check for wetness, so that the training period isn't interrupted. This is a nice "safety net" *for you* in certain public situations.

- Always keep a couple changes of pants and underwear in the car, so that you can return to the car for a quick change as soon as your child is wet, and then resume your errands.

### **When Your Child Begins to Attend the Young Children's Community**

Your child's teacher will advise you on what to do in the month before they start school. If you attended the Parent-Child series, you may have started your child in underwear before they begin school. If you have not begun toileting at home yet, your child's teacher may suggest that you bring them to school in diapers the first few days. The idea here is that we do not want to overwhelm your child with too many changes at once. Your child will have opportunities to use the potty at school, and will see classmates doing so. Within a short time, your child's teacher will ask that you begin bringing them to school in underwear and begin toileting at home as well. Consistency is vital for the easiest, quickest transition for your child.

Please call the office and ask your child's teacher to call you when you have questions, dilemmas, or just need some support with this process. Lynn Jessen is available for help as well. Parents who have completed this process are another great source of encouragement. We also recommend re-reading the section on toileting awareness in *Montessori From the Start*.