

# Diapers Are Not Forever



By Elizabeth Verdick  
Illustrated by Marieka Heinlen



Every day, you get  
bigger and **BIGGER**.

From  
head  
to toe,  
see how  
you've  
grown?







You have  
bigger shirts and  
pants and shoes.  
Now you're ready  
for something *else*  
that's new . . .



# Tips for Parents and Caregivers

There is no set age for toilet training to begin. Learning to use the potty is a developmental milestone: not all children are ready at the same time, and children respond differently to different training methods. It's important not to rush a child into using the toilet, but rather to let this happen on the child's timetable.

**Watch for signs that the time is right.** Does your child sometimes wake up dry from a nap or have a dry diaper for two or more hours at a time? Does your child notice when the diaper is wet or soiled or seem curious about how people use the toilet? Is this a relatively stress-free time in your child's life? (Avoid teaching toileting skills if you're moving or if you've just brought home a new baby. Wait for things to settle down.)

**Get information.** Share a variety of picture books about using the potty with your child. There are many resources for parents to learn about different methods of potty training, too. Consult your healthcare provider, and talk to parents who have been through the experience.

**Choose a potty.** You'll need a freestanding potty chair or a potty seat that fits onto your toilet (along with a sturdy stepstool so your child can get on and off the toilet independently). To get used to the potty, many children like to sit on it fully clothed or with a diaper for a while before beginning actual training, or they may like to pretend their stuffed animals are going potty. Emphasize the positive: "You're going to learn how the big kids go potty!" "It will be fun to wear underwear!" Be sure to use consistent terminology (pee, poop, BM, or other words you choose) so your child feels comfortable talking about toileting.

**Teach your child the signs of needing to go.** Explain the body signals that mean it's time to use the potty. You may want to let your child go bare-bottomed, use training pants, or wear underpants to get used to the sensation of not wearing a diaper. Make sure clothing isn't difficult to remove (avoid buttons, snaps, zippers) so it's easy for your child to rush to use the toilet.

**Find motivators.** Your child may be motivated by different things: a desire to please you, the idea that using the potty is a "grown-up" activity, or frequent praise. Some toddlers respond best to a visible reward system, such as a chart with stickers that mark moments of success. See what works for you and your little one, but avoid using food as a reward.

**Keep an eye on your child and the clock.** During training, watch for signs (such as wiggling around or squeezing legs together) that tell you your toddler needs to go. You might say, "Come with me, your potty is waiting!" and lead your child to it. You also can make regular trips to the toilet first thing in the morning, after a nap, before playing outdoors, and before bed.

**Teach good hygiene.** Show your child how to use toilet paper and wipe from front to back. Start a routine of hand washing with soap and warm water. Experts say a minimum of thirty seconds is needed to get hands clean (the amount of time it takes to sing the ABC song).

**Be positive and encouraging.** Your child will likely have quite a few "accidents" while learning to use the potty. Avoid being critical or scolding. Make sure using the potty is a positive activity that builds self-confidence. Patience is key.



Special thanks to Joseph Sockalosky, M.D.,  
Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota, for his guidance  
in developing these tips.