

Frequently asked questions

Potty training problems

Some children take to using a potty quickly, others take more time. Either way, it's common to have questions and face setbacks as your child learns this new skill.

Talk to your health visitor about any worries or questions. They'll have helped lots of parents see their children through potty training, and can give you tips to make things easier for you and your child.

My child doesn't want to use the potty

Try not to worry. Remind yourself that sooner or later, your child will want to be dry for their own sake. If they start to see potty training as a battle with you, it'll be much harder.

Leave the potty training for a month or so, then try again, slowly and calmly. A reward chart with stickers may help your child stay motivated.

My child won't stay sitting on the potty

Making potty training interesting for your child will encourage them to sit still on the potty. You could keep certain books or toys in the bathroom especially for potty times.

There's no need to keep your child on the potty for more than a couple of minutes. Praise your child when they manage to sit on the potty, whether or not they pee or poo each time.

My child keeps wetting themselves

You've got 2 options. You could go back to nappies for a while and try again in a few weeks, or you can keep leaving the nappies off, but be prepared to change and wash clothes a lot.

Whatever you decide, don't let it get you or your child down, and don't put pressure on them. Talk to other parents about how they coped.

Don't confuse your child by stopping and starting potty training too often. If you do stop, leave it for a few weeks before you start again.

My child uses the potty sometimes, but has accidents other times

Accidents will happen for a while, so when your child does use the potty or manages to stay dry, even if it's just for a short time, tell them how pleased you are.

Even though accidents can be very frustrating, try not to show your child how you are feeling. Explain that you want them to use the potty next time. If your child starts to worry about making a mess, the problem could get worse.

My child was dry for a while, but now they've started wetting themselves again

If your child has been dry for a while, either at night, during the day or both, and then starts wetting themselves again, it can mean they have a bladder infection, constipation, type 1 diabetes or threadworms. Ask your GP for more advice.

Alternatively, there may be an emotional reason. A change of routine or another disruption – such as moving house or a new baby arriving – can often have an effect.

The best thing you can do is be understanding and sympathetic. Your child will almost certainly be upset about wetting themselves and won't be doing it on purpose.

Stay positive and give your child gentle reminders about using the potty regularly.

My child is about to start school and still isn't dry

By this age, your child is likely to be just as upset by wetting themselves as you are. They need to know that you're on their side and you're going to help them solve the problem.

Talk to your health visitor or GP to get some guidance. They may refer you to a clinic for expert help.