

# TOILET TRAINING FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM: STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

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## TOPICS

- Readiness and how to prepare for toilet training
- Behavioral Methods:
  - Teaching cooperative sitting
  - Increasing successful voids on the toilet
  - Encouraging self-initiation
  - Teaching how to clean up after the job
  - Nighttime toilet training
- When to seek help

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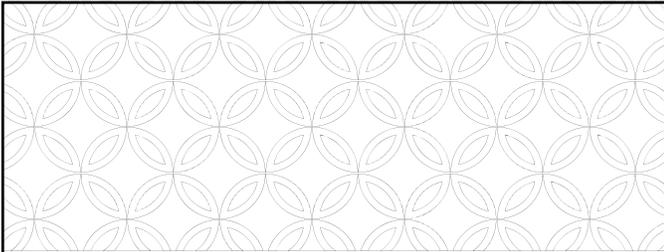
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## READINESS AND HOW TO PREPARE

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### WHEN IS YOUR CHILD READY?

#### Typically Developing Children

- Interest in using the toilet
- Wanting to wear underwear
- Ask for dirty diapers to be changed
- Express when they need to go to the bathroom

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### CHALLENGES FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

- Difficulty understanding your expectations
- Delays in communication
- Difficulty learning through imitation
- Preferences for routines and sameness
- Fears and phobias




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### WHEN IS YOUR CHILD READY?

#### Children with Autism

- Able to remain clean and dry for 1.5 to 2 hours
- No concerns related to constipation or other physical problems
- Demonstrate a minimal degree of compliance

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## HOW TO PREPARE

- Delay toilet training until you can consistently dedicate time to it
- Plan to spend 2 to 3 days entirely focused on toilet training
  - Limit activities outside of the home
  - Try not to take your child in the car
  - Try to find childcare for other children if possible

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## HOW TO PREPARE: THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

### Potty Chair

- Pros:
  - May be less scary
- Cons:
  - Will have to transition to the toilet eventually
- If used, always keep it in the bathroom!

### Toilet

- Pros:
  - No transition later
- Cons:
  - May be more scary
  - Child may be less relaxed




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## HOW TO PREPARE: THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- If using a toilet, think about inserts and footstools...
  - Makes your child more comfortable and stable
  - Footstools allow for a more natural position to move bowels




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### HOW TO PREPARE: THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Other comforts to consider in the bathroom
  - Dim lights or use lamps
  - Space heater
  - Small blanket/towel over the child's lap
  - Calming music

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### HOW TO PREPARE: THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Wait to teach boys to stand at the toilet
  - Want them to become experts in sitting on the toilet
  - Increases opportunities to have bowel movements on the toilet




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### HOW TO PREPARE: THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Want to support communication from the beginning of training
  - Verbal: use "bathroom" or "toilet" (instead of "potty")
  - PECS: photo may be easier
  - Always prompt twice



bathroom




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## HOW TO PREPARE: THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Think about how you will motivate your child!
- Rewards should be...
  - Easy to give (edibles are great!)
  - Not available at other times
  - Always paired with enthusiastic praise
  - Varied
  - Immediate (within 3 seconds)



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## GOALS IN TOILET TRAINING

1. Teaching cooperative sitting
2. Increasing successful voids on the toilet
3. Encouraging self-initiation
4. Teaching how to clean up after the job
5. Nighttime toilet training

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## TEACHING COOPERATIVE SITTING

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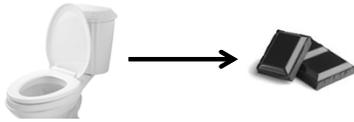
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## TEACHING COOPERATIVE SITTING

### • First – Then

- Easier for your child to understand and remember
- Creates a contract between you and your child
- Introduce this outside of the bathroom




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## TEACHING COOPERATIVE SITTING

### • Visual Timers

- Our goal is based in time – using a timer helps your child know what the goal is!
- Introduce visual timers outside of the bathroom
- Parent always holds the timer



"Children's Countdown Timer" (free)



"Time Timer" (\$2.99)

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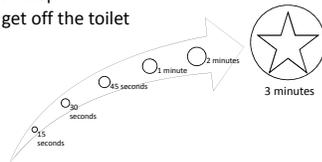
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## TEACHING COOPERATIVE SITTING

### • Using Shaping

- Break down your goal into steps
- Reward completion of each step
- Gently block attempts to get off the toilet




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### TEACHING COOPERATIVE SITTING

1. Prompt request for bathroom (two times!)
2. Show "First/Then" visual
3. Prompt to pull down pants (NOT taking them off)
4. Prompt to sit on toilet
5. Set timer – keep in child's view
6. Gently block attempts to get up
7. Provide rewards when timer goes off – while child is still sitting

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### TEACHING COOPERATIVE SITTING



- Considerations for the anxious child
  - Start slowly... first goal may be entering the bathroom
  - Toilet lid might need to stay closed initially
  - Pants might need to stay on initially
  - Start with continuous rewards (rather than just at the end)

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### INCREASING SUCCESSFUL VOIDS

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## INCREASING SUCCESSFUL VOIDS

- Major components of this phase:
  - Full-time underwear
  - Scheduled sits
  - Rewards for successful voids
  - Consequences for accidents
  - Data collection

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## INCREASING SUCCESSFUL VOIDS

- Child should be wearing underwear full-time
  - Pull-ups give your child a "green light" to void in their pants
  - Underwear allows for very quick discovery of accidents
- **EXCEPTIONS!**
  - Night time
  - Riding in the car and when in the community
  - At school... initially




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## INCREASING SUCCESSFUL VOIDS

- **Scheduled Sits**
  - Aim to have your child sit on the toilet every 30 to 45 minutes
  - Child should sit on toilet until he voids (or for 3 minutes if he does not void)
  - Reset schedule after accidents...
    - **EXAMPLE:**
      - Scheduled sit at 12:30
      - Accident happens at 12:45
      - Next scheduled sit is at 1:15

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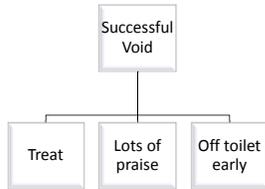
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## INCREASING SUCCESSFUL VOIDS

- Rewards for successful voids
  - Special treat or toy
  - Always paired with praise
  - Allowed to get off the toilet before the timer goes off



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## INCREASING SUCCESSFUL VOIDS

- What if your child doesn't have a successful void?
  - Expected to sit for the full 3 minutes
  - Provide praise for effort
  - No treats or rewards



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## INCREASING SUCCESSFUL VOIDS

- If you try scheduled sits for awhile and your child isn't successful, a few other strategies...
  - Increase the value of rewards
  - Gradually increase fluid intake
  - Warm water prompting
  - More rigorous toileting schedule
    - 5 minutes on, 10 minutes off



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## INCREASING SUCCESSFUL VOIDS

### • Wet Stop

- Helpful if you're having trouble catching accidents
- Allows for an immediate response to accidents
- Don't have to watch your child intently all day
- Facilitates learning for distracted children
- Can be used for nighttime training later on




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## INCREASING SUCCESSFUL VOIDS

### • Data Collection

- Track successes and accidents
- Helps to monitor progress
- Allows you to know when you can start to increase the duration between scheduled sits

60 minutes between sits	Successes	Accidents	Comments
9:00	Urine		
10:00	Urine		
11:00	None		
11:40		Urine	Playing on iPad
12:40	BM		

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## ENCOURAGING INDEPENDENCE

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### ENCOURAGING INDEPENDENCE

- Start fading your prompts
- Promote self-initiation and communication
  - Child is more motivated with increased duration between sits
  - Initially, accept "natural" gestures for the bathroom (pair this with communication later on)

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### ENCOURAGING INDEPENDENCE

- Cleaning up after the job
  - This is more difficult than it seems! Requires multiple skills
    - Tear off toilet paper
    - Wipe from the bottom up
    - Check toilet paper
    - Decide to wipe again?




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### ENCOURAGING INDEPENDENCE

- When teaching wiping, start in the kitchen first!
  1. Get paper towel
  2. Wipe counter (soy sauce, gravy, peanut butter)
  3. Check paper towel
  4. If towel is brown, throw it away
  5. Get more paper towel
  6. Wipe again
  7. Repeat until paper towel is clean

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### ENCOURAGING INDEPENDENCE

- 1.  Get toilet paper
- 2.  Tear off 5 squares of paper
- 3.  Stand up
- 4.  Wipe from bottom up

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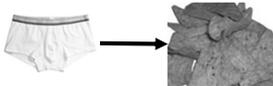
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### ENCOURAGING INDEPENDENCE

- Once your child knows how to wipe, build in rewards for successful wiping



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### ENCOURAGING INDEPENDENCE

- If you have an anxious child who doesn't want to wipe...
  - Have child wear plastic gloves
    - Introduce gloves OUTSIDE of the bathroom!
  - If this is still too challenging, delay wiping practice
- Some children prefer wet wipes over toilet paper



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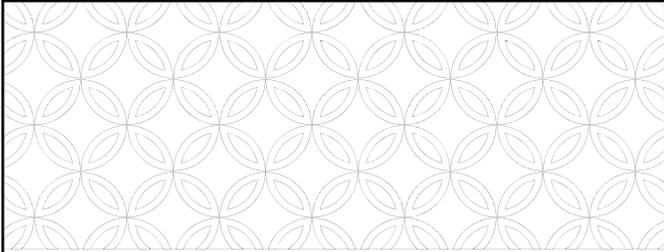
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### NIGHTTIME TOILET TRAINING

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### NIGHTTIME TOILET TRAINING

- Typically start around 7 years old
- **Readiness Criteria**
  - Consider medication side effects
  - Rule-out medical contributions
  - Independent use of bathroom during the day
  - Self-initiating during the day

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### NIGHTTIME TOILET TRAINING

- Modify the nighttime environment
  - Lighting in the bedroom, hallway, and bathroom
  - Location of bed to allow easy access
  - Ability to independently get in and out of bed



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## NIGHTTIME TOILET TRAINING

- One wake-up per night
  - Allows toilet practice at night
  - Reduces burden on the bladder
- Simple reward system
  - IF child knows how to get up and go to the bathroom at night
  - Motivating reward for having a dry bed in the morning

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## DRY BED TRAINING

1. Underwear at night
2. Practice the steps from bed to the bathroom
3. Plastic sheets on the bed
4. Must use a Wet Stop and baby monitor!
5. Fluid loading before bed (for the first two nights)



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## DRY BED TRAINING

- When the Wet Stop goes off...
  1. Wake him up and give a brief reminder
  2. Prompt him to go to the bathroom
  3. Have your child change pajamas
  4. Reset the Wet Stop
  5. Reload fluids (for the first two nights)

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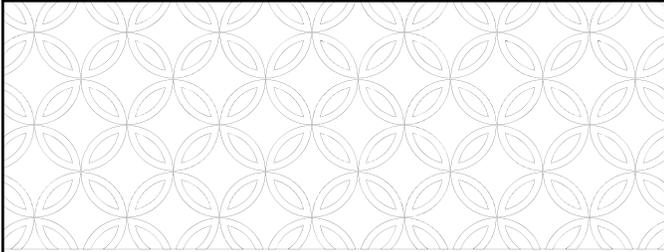
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WHEN TO SEEK HELP |

Seven horizontal lines for writing notes.

WHEN DO YOU NEED TO GET EXTRA HELP?

- Toileting accidents are normative in early development
- Extra help may be warranted if...
  - Your child is *developmentally* 5 years of age or older
  - Having two or more accidents per week

Seven horizontal lines for writing notes.

WHAT KIND OF HELP SHOULD YOU LOOK FOR?

- Primary Care/Developmental Pediatrician
  - Rule-out associated medical conditions
    - May make additional referrals
  - Consider medication side-effects
- Behavioral Therapy
  - Can be provided by a psychologist or BCBA
  - Should include parent training
- Services are available through KKI and Hopkins
- [www.pathfindersforautism.org](http://www.pathfindersforautism.org)

Seven horizontal lines for writing notes.

**Save the Date!**

**18<sup>th</sup> Annual CARD Autism Conference:  
*A Portrait of Success***

October 11 – 12, 2018 at the Radisson Hotel North Baltimore

This annual conference is the premier educational autism event in the region and addresses a wide range of topics across the lifespan, featuring more than a dozen workshops and speakers on topics of importance to the autism community.

Keynote presenters: Lisa Wiggins, Ph.D. & Brenda Smith Myles, Ph.D.



Center for Autism and Related Disorders  
at Kennedy Krieger Institute

[Kennedykriegercard.eventbrite.com](http://Kennedykriegercard.eventbrite.com)

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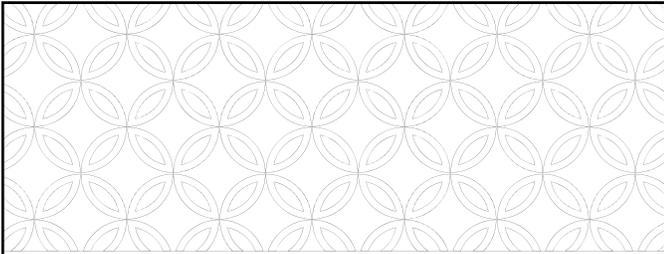
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QUESTIONS? |

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