



Giving Your Child a **Fresh Start** to Avoid **Soiling Accidents**

Hit and miss. Stop and go. Just in time or too late.

Toilet training can be tough for parents and children alike, and a lot can go wrong before kids master this skill. Accidents are a normal part of the learning process, and parents must remember to have a lot of patience (as well as a dry set of underwear and pants).

Even when parents think their child is completely toilet trained, occasional accidents and mishaps can occur. But there's no need to worry or panic. Here are a few tips for getting through that period when your child almost has it down but isn't quite there.

Getting Started

- **Monitor the frequency of your child's bowel habits.** A normal stooling pattern for children is to have a bowel movement every day or at least every other day. If your child's movements are less frequent than this, you may want to monitor the frequency to determine if he or she is constipated or are holding his or her stool to avoid discomfort or pain. It's also possible your child is not going because he or she fears soiling his or her pants and disappointing you.
- **Monitor your child's wiping technique.** Some children have successful bowel movements in

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the toilet, but aren't very good at wiping. This can result in staining or minor soiling episodes. Simply helping your child practice while making some minor adjustments in his or her technique can quickly resolve this issue.

- **Keep a journal of your child's soiling accidents.** Many children have soiling accidents because they are too busy playing and do not want to take time to use the bathroom. Other children ignore the physical cues that are associated with having a bowel movement, again, because going to the bathroom is not as important as the fun activities they enjoy throughout the day. Your journal will help you determine why your child is not going to the bathroom when he or she should. Then you can remind your child that it is important to "listen to your body" and, if necessary, set specific times before certain activities for him or her to sit on the toilet.

Continuing the Effort

If you consistently use these three steps for a few weeks and the soiling episodes continue, there are some other general steps you can take as you work toward resolving the issue.

- **Re-establish regular sit times.** A good time to have your child sit on the toilet for a bowel movement would be 10-15 minutes after each meal. Set a timer for five minutes and tell your child you want him or her to stay there at least until the timer dings. It's okay to give your child a book or toy if it helps him or her relax. Praise your child's cooperation with sitting and if he or she has a bowel movement, provide special praise and attention.
- **Again, remind your child to "listen to your body."** When your child does "listen" to the physical cues and has a bowel movement in the toilet, make a big deal about it, heap on the praise and give a special reward.
- **Check regularly for clean underwear.** If your child is clean, praise him or her. If your child has had an accident, have him or her help clean up.



Children ages 4 and older should be able to remove their soiled clothing, rinse it out and put it in the washing machine. With your help, they also should be able to clean themselves. It may be necessary to have your child sit in a few inches of water in the bathtub to avoid getting a rash. In general, your child should see this whole cleaning-up process as a "hassle" that keeps him or her away from playing and having fun. This eventually teaches your child that it's easier to leave an activity for a few minutes to go the bathroom than to have an accident and have to spend a lot of time cleaning up, changing clothes and missing out on something fun.

If you follow these steps and your child continues to have difficulties, consult your child's pediatrician.

Additional Resource

→ ***The Ins and Outs of Poop: A Guide to Treating Childhood Constipation*** by Thomas Duhamel

➡ **For more information** or to make an appointment at the Boys Town Center for Behavioral Health, call **531-355-3358**.

Visit **BoysTown.org/Parenting** for more information from the parenting experts at Boys Town.