



## VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

### Toileting Skills

Families living with autism spectrum disorder often look for tips on how to handle the many different challenges that may arise. “Real Life Tips for Kids with Autism” is a series of practical videos and resources presented by the experts at Children’s Specialized Hospital.

Toilet training is a really important skill to have because there’s very few skills that I can think of that will have more of an impact on quality of life. Toilet training will go easier if you watch for readiness signs. So some of the readiness signs are: that the person can stay dry for one hour at a time, that the person is able to follow a one-step command, such as stand up, sit down, pull up your pants. Another readiness sign is to understand cause and effect. So if the person understands “if I do this, I will get that.” You don’t always need to look for the common readiness sign among typically developing children, is if the person appears uncomfortable when they’re wet or soiled. Sometimes a person with autism might not go through that because of reduced body que sensation. So I wouldn’t say that that’s an absolute required readiness sign.

Now don’t be scared but when you’re really committing to toilet training you want to, from that day forward, have the person be in underwear. Goodbye diapers. If you need to use a pull-up, you can put the pull-up over the underwear. But the reason why you want to be using the underwear is so that the person has the sensation of what it feels like when they are wet or when they are soiled. And it actually can be helpful to have colored underwear because then it’s easier for you to see when there has been an accident, when they have wet themselves.

You can do something like Sit for Six. And this means that six times during the day, practice sitting on the toilet for two minutes at a time in five minute intervals. And again, choose a time that you want to do it based on your baseline data that shows when you are most likely, when the person is most likely to pee or poop. Or you might need to do it more frequently, and that might mean that every five minutes you are showing your card or saying “time to go to the bathroom”, and sit on the toilet, pull down the pants, pull down the underwear, sit on the toilet, sit for two minutes. If they pee or poop, then that’s great. If they don’t you can say “No pee, No poop, Go off and do something else and come back again in a few minutes.”

It’s important to find a really great reward that will be highly motivating to the person and that’s only associated with toilet training. And if this is a reward, let’s say it’s some type of candy, or maybe it’s access to some type of game, if you can actually have it in the bathroom with you, maybe on a higher shelf so you can say, “You pee in the toilet, you get this candy.” But this is something that they should not have access to other than if they successfully peed or pooped in the toilet.

If the person successfully poops, and you know by your baseline data how often they poop, then you might not need to try sitting on the toilet to poop again until the next period of time that they normally go, or let’s say after a meal. Peeing can be a little bit more unpredictable. But if somebody is peeing on the toilet, they probably don’t need to pee again in the next few minutes. So you’ll learn by process of trial and error when the next toileting trial should be.

If the person has an accident, and their underwear is wet or soiled, you want to make sure that they are changed in the bathroom and they participate in the changing process as much as possible. So you can be matter of fact; you're gonna be calm and say "remember pee and poop goes in the toilet". Have the person assist with undressing, cleaning, maybe dumping the bowel movement into the toilet if that's the case, and washing up. Once you see some signs of success, and you'll know that you have success because you're comparing it to the baseline data, then you can start to increase the intervals of the toilet training and eventually you want the person to be able to initiate it him or herself by saying "I need to go" or going themselves, but that's gonna take some time.

Visual schedules can be very helpful because many people with autism really benefit from having a visual. An example of a visual schedule might be something like this, you could take photographs of the person or you can use these kinds of drawings, or cartoons. There's a lot of things you can download from the internet. And you want to show each of the steps in the process. Probably make a few copies of this because you can review this when you're not in the bathroom, just remember "first we do this, and then we do this." You might want to laminate it and have it in the bathroom, a poster in the bathroom, so that you can guide them about what comes next or they could look at the visual schedule about what comes next. Some people develop some kind of song, or rhyme, that also helps to remember the steps, and again this can be very helpful.

A helpful teaching tool is to model. If you're comfortable, bring the person in, and show them how you go to the bathroom and the steps that you go through. Or you can use a sibling, or possibly another child. And if that's not a comfortable thing for your family, there are videos, toilet training videos, that could be very helpful too. So the person can see a visual model about how to do it.

It is important to be consistent, so you want to communicate among all of the people involved in the person with autism's life. So that would include the people at school, other therapists, other relatives or friends, or caregivers. It could be helpful to have a written plan of how you're doing the toileting, talks about how often, what to do, what the reward is, what to do if there is an accident. So that everybody's on the same page. What words to use. Again, we know that people with autism really like routine and they like to be consistent, to have consistency, and this will help.

There are lots of resources you could use to help with toilet training. At Children's Specialized Hospital, we would love to partner with you. You can talk to the teacher, a behaviorist, an occupational therapist, all of these people probably have special skills that can help with toilet training, and there are many things on the internet that also can be very helpful.



Through a partnership with Kohl's Cares, Children's Specialized Hospital is improving access to care for children with special health care needs.



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