



VICTORIAN CONTINENCE RESOURCE CENTRE



# Tip sheet: Not moving forward may be moving backwards

Your child has been making real progress with toilet training when suddenly it all stops! Instead of moving forward they are going backwards.

The child who may have been having few accidents is now wet all the time. Frustrating and puzzling as this backward step is, it is a common occurrence, known as regression.

Let's look at some of the reasons for regression and how you can get your child back on track with toileting.

## Some reasons for regression

- Rewards and praise for keeping dry and clean may have been removed too quickly.
- Accidents with wee and poo are getting a lot of attention. Your child repeats this behaviour because it gets your attention.
- Change in the family routine – a new baby, moving house, going on holiday, change in child care arrangements or starting school can throw your child out of the good routines you have established.
- An episode of constipation resulting in passing a painful poo can make your child refuse to use the toilet.
- The child has had an illness or infection, especially a urinary tract infection.
- Having a 'bad' experience in the toilet is causing your child to become fearful of using the toilet.
- There has been a change in diet or medications.

## How to get back on track

- Keep calm. Calmly say, 'You've done wee (or a poo). Come on, let's get changed.' Go to the bathroom and help your child clean up. Keep the conversation to the minimum and do not make the clean-up fun time for your child.
- Check your child's health. If you think your child may have an infection or constipation see your doctor early to have the problem treated.
- If your family routine has changed slow down your toilet training expectations. As a result of the change, you may not be giving your child the amount of attention they need.
- Re-establish the daily routine of taking your child to the toilet at regular times such as following meals, daytime sleep, and before bath time.
- Take your child to the toilet before a long play because play is too enjoyable to stop to go to the toilet.
- Use the *Wee & poo: daily recording sheet* on page 24 of the booklet for a week to track when accidents with wee or poo happen. Recording will also help you identify how many accidents are happening.
- Restart the toileting routine. Use praise and rewards to get your child interested in getting back on track. Remember to give them immediately otherwise the reward loses its power to encourage the behaviour you are rewarding. If the reward is not given immediately the child may be confused about what they did to earn the reward.
- Gradually fade out the reward and praise, but don't not stop giving them too quickly as your child may go backwards again.
- Keep a daily record of the number of accidents with wee or poo to chart the progress your child is making.