



VICTORIAN CONTINENCE RESOURCE CENTRE



# Tip sheet: The toilet area

The toilet area needs to be an inviting place where your child feels safe and relaxed, and is happy to go.

If you have more than one toilet, use only one; this should be the toilet closest to where your child spends most of their time or the one they prefer. Using the same toilet at home each time will help your child know what to expect in the toilet so they can focus on the steps of toileting. Set this toilet up with the equipment needed such as foot stool or toilet seat insert.

## Some suggestions for the toilet area

The toilet area needs to suit your child's physical, emotional and sensory needs. The following suggestions may give you some ideas for achieving this.

### Making the area inviting

- Decorate the walls with posters, wall charts or a sticker chart with your child's photo. Photos or pictures showing the toileting routine can be placed on the wall or back of the door. A three-picture or photo sequence showing 'sit on the toilet', 'wee or poo in the toilet' and reward can help to remind your child of the toileting routine.
- Use soft lighting or a coloured light shade if your child is sensitive to glare.
- Place a lucky-dip bag on the door handle which contains small toys or book.
- Create coloured water in the toilet with food colouring.
- Ensure the toilet area is warm.
- Have an open-door policy so your child sees other family members use the toilet as part of normal routine.
- If the fan and light are on the one switch and your child is sensitive to the noise of the fan, you may need to use a small portable light

### Making the area safe

- Stay nearby when your child is sitting on the toilet.
- Use suitable equipment for your child's needs. Such items can include: a toilet seat insert to make the hole smaller; a 'toilet throne' which gives lots of support; a footstool which helps them balance; a musical potty which gives a 'fun' reward; and a padded toilet seat for comfort and which may help the child feel safer.

- Act out toileting with the child's doll or teddy.
- Place a favourite toy or teddy or doll on a toy potty in the room.
- Talk or sing or play games with your child.
- Read a book about toileting to your child.

### Making the area relaxing

- Play music which makes them relax or feel happy.
- Place a warm, colourful mat on the floor.
- Blow bubbles together while your child sits and relaxes.
- Choose toilet paper which is soft, has pictures, or is coloured.
- Use soap, room sprays/deodorisers or disinfectants that your child finds pleasant smelling. Unperfumed products are useful for children who do not tolerate perfume or strong smells. Be aware that some cleaning products can be very strong smelling and may put your child off wanting to go into the toilet area.
- Use clothing which is easy to pull up and down.

### Specialised equipment

For specialised equipment such as rails or modified seats talk to your child's occupational therapist or physiotherapist.

### Sensory issues

Some children may be distressed by sensory factors – sight, sound, smell, touch or temperature – resulting in their refusal to enter the toilet. Possible reasons children may refuse to enter the toilet area or refuse to sit on the toilet include:

- noise – toilet flush, fan, echo or hand dryers
- glare from bright lights
- touch – cold seat, toilet paper, pulling pants down
- smell of soaps, room sprays, deodoriser or disinfectants.

Talk to your child's occupational therapist for more ideas if sensory issues cause your child distress when taken to the toilet and the ideas in this tip sheet have not helped.