



VICTORIAN CONTINENCE RESOURCE CENTRE



## Tip sheet: Won't sit for poo

Your child may be happy to sit on the toilet to do wee but refuse point blank to sit to do poo.

They may ask for a nappy, or hold on for days if the nappy is not given; do poo in their pants; or wait until they are in their night nappy to poo. Parents often find these situations difficult to deal with and feel their child is never going to get out of nappies.

Be reassured that issues with poo are common. Here are some ideas you can try to help your child move to doing poo in the toilet.

### Why this may be happening for your child

There are several reasons why your child may not be doing poo in the toilet. The child may:

- have poor understanding of what they are meant to do on the toilet.
- be anxious or fearful about sitting on the toilet.
- fear 'letting go' of poo. This can be a very real fear for children. It is not well understood but seems to have a lot to do with poo being solid and the child seeing it as part of themselves being flushed down the toilet. Let your child know you can see they are frightened but help them to understand that the poo is 'happy' to go into the toilet: it's only rubbish the body is getting rid of.
- have learnt to poo standing and do not want or know how to poo on the toilet.
- be constipated or have difficulty in passing poo.
- not like the smell of their poo.

If your child is constipated see your doctor to get treatment before you try the next suggest.

### Saying bye bye to the poo nappy

Moving your child from a nappy for poo to using the toilet often needs a set plan. Here are the nappy rules:

- Your child is allowed to have a nappy put on for poo but the nappies need to be kept in the bathroom.
- Take your child to the toilet or bathroom for the nappy to be put on.
- Start by setting limits about where your child can go to use the nappy for poo. For example, their bedroom is OK but best is near the toilet. They are not allowed to go into the lounge, kitchen, dining room, family room or outside.

- Gradually limit the nappy area to the toilet/bathroom. Your child remains there until they have done poo. You can leave your child with a toy or a book.
- Remove the nappy after they have done poo and get your child to help clean up – as much as they are able. If you need to do most of the cleaning and changing of clothes do not make this a fun time. Talk only as necessary.
- Have them empty the poo into the toilet because that's where poo goes! Your child can then flush the toilet and wash and dry their hands.
- Have your child stand to put on and take off the nappy so they can take an active part in the process. Also your child can't wipe their bottom when lying down.

Once your child is sitting on the toilet with a nappy on and doing poo, the following ideas can be used to remove the nappy:

- Place the nappy under the toilet seat so the child can still feel it. Then over a period of time the nappy is lowered so it is not touching their bottom and eventually removed altogether. You may be able to replace the nappy with toilet paper.
- Use increasingly smaller sized nappies until eventually the child is told that there are no longer any nappies that fit them. Tell them that they will have to start doing poo on the toilet without the nappy as they are now a 'big' boy/girl.
- Put the nappy on without fastening. The nappy is eventually replaced by paper towels and then toilet paper until that is reduced to a couple of sheets before being removed completely.
- Cut a hole in the nappy which is increased in size until the child is actually doing poo through it.

Remember the reward! Usually the poo reward is bigger and more exciting to the child as it is given less often than the wee reward. Page 13 in the booklet covers rewards in more detail.

Have an accident plan for dealing with poo in the underwear. Page 17 in the booklet gives more information about accident plans.

The problem of not wanting to poo in the toilet often seems like a battle of wills – but if you have a clear, consistent approach with lots of praise you will win not only the battle but also the war!