

Toilet training can be a difficult time for anyone...

....but it can be especially hard when a child is on the Autism Spectrum. This leaflet aims to demonstrate some of the commonly found problems, give reasons as to why they occur, and what strategies may be effective in remedying such issues.



Autism Spectrum Team



Books:

- Toilet Training for individuals with Autism or other developmental Issues, by Carol Stock Kranowitz wheeler (2007)
- The content within the above has no connection with the Autism Spectrum Team and as such they hold no legal obligation.



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Toileting Issues



Typical Issues

- **Not realising the need to go.**

Some children with ASC don't understand that the sensation in their stomach can be a sign of needing to go to the toilet and so fail to make it in time before it is too late.

- **Fear of going to the bath room/toilet.**

The bathroom can be a place of distress for a child with ASD. For example the smell of the environment and different textures (such as the toilet seat) can be overwhelming for someone with these sensory issues.

- **Fear of giving up the wee or poo, for example -**

Some children may not like the feeling of losing part of their body.

- **Poo or wee in the wrong places**

- **Fear of going in different places e.g. school public places friends house**

- **Lack of realisation that child can be taught to go to the toilet**

- **Not wanting to move on from using the nappy or potty**

Child may have rigidity in their routine or express fear of using a new method.

- **Spending too much time in the toilet e.g. escape or specific interest**

- **Coordination issues**

A child may have difficulty sitting or balancing on the toilet, or using toilet tissue

- **Smearing**

Why?

Environment:

The temperature, size of the room and the noise of the flush can all be an issue to children with ASD. Public toilets can also be a big issue in terms of there being other people in the toilet who are unfamiliar to the child/young person. They may also have concerns about the cleanliness of the toilets as they may have issues with germs. In addition to this the lighting and noise of the hand dryer may also be an issue.

Sensory issues:

There are children who may not feel the need to go to the toilet or in fact know what it should feel like. The link between the sensation in their stomach and the need for them to go to the toilet may not have been made.

Social understanding:

Not knowing where, when or how to go can be another issue. The child may be worried about expectations and therefore may force themselves to go or may hold on for too long.

Communication:

The child may struggle with communicating that they need to go, or may just not tell anyone.

Literal interpretation:

Children may have the tendency to interpret instructions literally – for example, “wash your hands in the toilet”, or “don't come out until you have been”.

Flexibility:

Obsessions with the sounds and smells of the toilet, tissues, paper towels.



Strategies:

- Help the child to realise the link between the ache in their tummy and/or the dampness in their underwear and associating this with needing to go to the toilet.
- Use words and pictures to help child understand where the toilet is and what to do.
- Slowly introduce the child/young person to the toilet and the sounds and smells associated with it, for example - using pictures at first, followed by standing in the room.
- Reduce stress by taking away the pressure to perform in order to help the child become more comfortable with the toilet/bathroom.
- Encourage the child to become comfortable with one toilet before introducing them to another one.
- Explain to the child what happens to poo or wee once flushed.
- Use words and pictures in order to introduce the use of the new toilets.
- Allow some controlled time to play with water and away from the toilet to allow exploration.
- Give the child a simple phrase or symbol to use to indicate that they need to go to the toilet.
- Consider offering rewards or a motivation for correct toilet use. E. g., Poo in the toilet = Reward.

