



TOILET TRAINING

Autistic children can find toilet training particularly challenging. They may:

- Dislike and/or avoid the bathroom or toilet due to sensitivity to the smells and noises (e.g. toilet flush, hand drier).
- Find it difficult to recognise sensations from their bowel and/or bladder. This means that they will not know when or if they need to use the toilet or how to control their bowel or bladder muscles for elimination.
- Find it difficult to communicate that they need the toilet or have a soiled nappy.
- Find it difficult to sit and balance on the toilet independently.
- Find it difficult to undress and dress their lower half independently.
- Find it difficult to learn new skills and change their routine.
- Master skill in one environment (e.g. at home or at toilet next to their classroom at school) but find it difficult to transfer the skills to other toilets around the school or in the community.

The following signs indicate that a child is ready to start toilet training:

- The child is able to sense the need to void their bowel or bladder.
- The child can stay dry for at least 2 hours at a time.
- Others can recognise by the child's facial expression, posture or actions that they are voiding.
- The child notices and/or becomes distressed by having a soiled or wet nappy.
- The child is able to follow simple instructions (verbal or visual instructions).
- The child is having regular bowel movements and a fairly consistent diet (eating and drinking).

When a child is showing all or most of these signs, staff at The Queensmill Trust will begin to prepare them for toilet training. This preparation involves working towards the child being:

- Familiar with the bathrooms in the school setting and comfortable going into these rooms.
- Willing and able to sit on the toilet and get on and off the toilet with minimal assistance.
- Able to pull pants down with minimal assistance.
- Able to communicate that their nappy needs changing or that they need to use the toilet. This may be communicated using PECS, a sign or verbally.

To ensure as much success as possible with toilet training, staff at The Queensmill Trust will:

- Wait to start toilet training until the child shows signs that they are ready despite their age.
- Go at the child's pace.
- Give lots of reinforcement throughout toilet training (e.g. stickers, motivating toys, praise).
- Avoid toilet training during periods of stress or anxiety for the child (for example if there are big changes at home or at school or the child is going through a period of unsettled behaviour).
- Aim to start toilet training during the summer months when it is likely to be easier for children to recognise when their nappy is soiled or wet.
- Take the child to the toilet regularly once toilet training has started.
- Incorporate role play (e.g. using dolls), stories and videos to help children learn about using the toilet.
- Use pants rather than pull-ups during toilet training. Pull-ups can feel the same as nappies which makes it more difficult for the child to recognise that they are wet or soiled.

How parents can help:

- Understand that it may take a long time for your child to be ready to start toilet training and it may take your child much longer than siblings or other children to master this skill. Due to the difficulties listed above, your child may never be fully independent with toileting.
- Understand that The Queensmill Trust staff will work hard to support your child in reaching their potential with all self-care skills. The Queensmill Trust Therapy and Family Support team is available to provide advice to parents on this as needed.
- When your child is ready to start toilet training, class staff at The Queensmill Trust will let you know. We will need lots of spare clothes (pants, trousers and socks) as your child may go through 3-4 changes each day while they are learning this skill.

If you have any concerns about your child's toileting, discuss with their Occupational Therapist or teacher.