**Toilet Training**

*By Allison Powell*

*Specialist Advisory Teacher, Ups and Downs Southwest 2014*

A large number of children with Down syndrome are clean and dry by the age of 5 years but around 5 - 20% of all children will have an ongoing wetting/soiling problem.

* Most children wee 5-7 times per day
* Most children poo no more than 3 poos per day and no less than 3 poos per week

Implementing a toilet training plan at school is going to be most effective if school and home plan and work together and act consistently.

**Getting your child ready**

In order for a child to be toilet trained they need:

* a bladder that can hold on to urine for at least 1-2 hours;
* a bowel that is not constipated or have toddler diarrhoea;
* to be able to sit on a potty/toilet for up to 5 mins;
* to have some awareness of wees and poos!

**Raising Awareness**

Until a child is fully aware of what it feels like to be wet or soiled. Modern disposable nappies contain ‘super absorbency’ so that the child never feels wet.

Raising the child’s awareness is the first step.

* Place disposable pad (kitchen roll) in nappy or have the child wear knickers or pants beneath their nappy.
* check nappy every hour and record wet/dry
* involve child in checking
* toileting programme then developed from your new understanding of the pattern and/or frequency of the child’s toileting habits.

**Getting Started with Bowel Control – home**

* Introduce sitting on the potty/toilet after meals
* Talk about poos in a positive way and praise when performed!
* Show putting poo in toilet
* Avoid constipation by encouraging 6-8 drinks per day and fruit and veg in diet

**Getting Started – daytime dryness**

* Carry out baseline assessment to identify frequency of wees and time interval in between
* Use trainer pants or liner in nappy so you and child know when wet
* sit on the potty/toilet 15 mins or so before expected void - adjust as necessary
* give drink 20-30 mins before potty time

**Toilet training programmes – school** Remove the nappy! Or at the very least, have the child wear a pair of pants underneath their nappy so that they can feel when they are wet.

* Devise a timed /scheduled toileting programme for school and home and stick to it. Be guided by what you have come to learn about the frequency of their toileting habits.
* Visit the same toilets their peers use. Use the disabled toilets for those occasions where the child has wet or soiled and needs to be changed. Make no fuss when this happens.
* Have toilet breaks feature on the child’s visual timetable.
* Behavioural programmes – introduce basic reward programmes:
	+ check for dryness at regular intervals and use positive reinforcement for dry pants.
	+ Rewarding time spent on the toilet or potty can be misleading: you can inadvertently reinforce the idea that the aim is for them simply to sit on the toilet and not for them to *use* it!

**What if my child is not clean and dry aged 5 – 6 years?**

Unless there is an additional medical condition, there is no reason why a child with Down syndrome cannot be toilet trained. Each child is different, so what will work quickly and easily for one, will take longer or may not work at all for another. Consistency and perseverance are key, as is a positive attitude towards toileting times and lots and lots of praise.

If you are concerned, it may be helpful to check for:

* Number of wees per day
* Number of poos per day/week
* Constipation
* Fluid intake
* Diet – plenty of fruit and veg
* The child’s awareness of what wees/poos are.

Be patient: the child will get there in the end!