



HILLTOP
MONTESSORI
SCHOOL

TOILET LEARNING



At Hilltop Montessori School, we think of the process of moving out of diapers and into independence as "toilet learning". This differs from "toilet training" because it is adult *supported* rather than adult *directed*, and because there is an emphasis on keeping the child involved in their own learning.

Toilet learning starts in the **Toddler Program** with readiness signs. It is a skill that needs to be learned over time. The key to toilet learning is teaching, not training the child. We do not use a reward system. There are no 'accidents' during toilet learning, only lessons. Language also plays a big part in keeping a positive attitude with toilet learning.

Signs of readiness may include:

- Dry diapers at changing times or stays dry for a long while; wet or dirty diapers mostly after a meal
- Interest in toilet (what it does, how it works) or in others using the toilet (e.g. mom, dad, sibling)
- Interest in wearing underwear and/or enthusiastic about dressing themselves
- Aware of the need and is able to verbally tell you when needing to use the toilet; able to let you know if they are wet/dirty after they have eliminated in a diaper
- Dislikes having wet/soiled diaper
- Tries to hide when they are having a bowel movement
- Has a bowel movement in the same spot most days

- Wants to stand instead of sit after a bowel movement

In the Toddler Program, we support children who are learning to use the toilet in a variety of ways. We read books about using the toilet and talk about using it in a matter-of-fact way. Children are given the opportunity to sit on the toilet during natural transition times as we enter and exit the classroom, before and after meals, before and after naps, and after diaper changes. Children are shown how to wipe and wash up after using the toilet. We support their practice of pulling pants up and down and getting on and off the toilet independently. We watch for signs that children need to use the toilet and help them get there. We keep in close contact with parents to communicate signs of readiness and their child's progress through toilet learning.

Here are some easy daily things you can do at home that will really help your child's progression. It is critical that school and home be consistent with expectations and toileting routines in order for your child to be successful.

- 1) Talk about using the toilet. Give your child the vocabulary needed to communicate with you about it. Try using mildly positive, factual observations like, "You have been dry the whole day" or "You're using the toilet just like Mom and Dad." Be cautious about overdoing excitement or praise; excessive positive reinforcement can be too much pressure. For example, when a child urinates in their underwear and clothes, a teacher may say matter of factly, "I see your clothes are wet; let's go get some dry clothes so you will feel more comfortable." When possible, we try

to involve the child in the clean-up process, especially in undressing and dressing themselves.

- 2) If your child is using diapers, change them standing up in the bathroom and offer the opportunity to sit on the potty or toilet each time. Encourage your child to wear cotton training pants only (Gerber brand works well). "Pull-Ups" may confuse or delay toilet learning and they wick away moisture so effectively that they discourage a child from remembering to urinate in the toilet.
- 3) Dress for success: offer underwear and pants that are easy to get on and off quickly. Soft sweatpants and/or leggings with elastic waists are good options until the child is able to manage snaps, buttons, and zippers easily. Several sets of clothes need to be provided from home and replaced as necessary, including shirts, elastic-waist pants, underwear, socks and shoes. Please label all items!
- 4) When children have wet or dirty pants, stay calm and neutral. Give the message that it's part of the learning process and when it happens we clean up and move on. If your child has a bowel movement in a diaper or small potty, they can help flush it down the toilet.
- 5) Offer opportunities to use, or remind children when it's time to use, the toilet during natural transition times (after waking up, before leaving the house, after meals, etc.) During the first weeks of toileting, your child will need to be asked to use the toilet often, approximately every 30 - 45 minutes. If your child does not want to try the toilet,

teachers will simply remind and encourage. When at home, you may encourage your child in the same way. Invite your child to go to the bathroom without making it sound like a command. Rather than ask a yes/no question like, "Do you need to go potty?," try a brief statement like, "Let's go try the toilet," or "I see you're awake; let's go to the bathroom." Please avoid placing your child on the toilet if they resist, as this is a delicate time in your child's growth toward independence! Offering limited choices can also be effective, "Do you want to go to the toilet now, or after you've put your socks on?"

- 6) Encourage children with a penis to sit while they are using the toilet until they are tall enough to stand at the bowl and adept enough to aim.
- 7) Show children how to wipe and give them opportunities to practice. You can still help them "finish up" if you want make sure it's a thorough job.
- 8) Avoid punishments and rewards. They don't work and often backfire. The toilet is not a place for playing, socializing, reading books, etc. The longer you linger, the more your child might lose focus as to why they are there.

Keep in mind that your child wants to be like you! Modeling toileting at home will help your child feel more comfortable when they are ready for this natural part of life. Remember to always finish with hand washing, as this will instill a healthy habit once they are toileting independently. If your child refuses to use the toilet, avoid the power struggle and try another time. Patience

and understanding go a long way, and consistency without pressure will help your child achieve success!

Toileting is an important and exciting time in your child's life. We feel confident that as we work together, we can help your child take that next valuable step forward!

Students in the **Children's House Program** have learned to use the toilet. We define learning as the ability to consistently use the toilet independently. This may sound simple but there are many steps involved for the young child. These skills take time to learn and children need help from adults to lead them through the process.

When children have mastered using the toilet they can:

- 1) Tell an adult, with words, when they have to use it before they have to go.
- 2) Postpone going if they must wait for a bathroom to be available.
- 3) Pull down their underwear and pants and get them back up without assistance.
- 4) Wipe themselves after using the toilet.
- 5) Get off the toilet by themselves. (Our little toilets make that possible for very small people!)
- 6) Wash and dry their hands.