

# Changing Your Child's Bathroom Habits

---

For most adults, emptying the bladder is easy. You go to the toilet and you can urinate without really thinking about it.

But many children have problems urinating. Some children have problems at a very young age. Other children have problems as they get older.

Even though you might not think about it, it is actually kind of hard to urinate well. Your bladder has to work together with the muscles that let the urine out. That takes a lot of coordination. Good bathroom habits are important to help your child get better.

Use these suggestions to help your child's bathroom habits.

## 1. Urinate on a schedule

- Your child needs to sit on the toilet and try to urinate every \_\_\_\_\_ hours, even if they don't feel like they need to.
- You should not just ask your child if he or she needs to go. He or she needs to actually try. Sometimes they might not be able to go and that's okay.
- Some children need to urinate very often. Let your child go as often as he or she wants. But then send him or her back at the scheduled time, even if he or she just went. Over time, this teaches the bladder what it is supposed to do.

- We are happy to give you a note for your child's school or day care explaining that your child needs to go to the bathroom on a schedule.

## 2. Use good posture

- Your posture (how you sit or stand) affects how well you urinate. It is important to relax the pelvic floor muscles to let the urine out.
- If you have a boy, he might need to sit at first to help him relax. When he is doing better with emptying and staying dry, he can stand to urinate.
- If you have a girl, she should spread her legs widely. She might need to take her pants off one leg to let her legs open wide enough. Sometimes we even ask girls to sit backwards on the toilet, which really helps the legs open wide. Keeping the legs open helps her relax the right muscles to let the urine out. It also will keep her from trapping urine in her vagina. Urine hurts the skin, and it can get red or irritated if she urinates with her legs together.
- If your child's feet don't touch the floor, put a small step stool in front of the toilet.

*(continued)*

### 3. Have your child urinate 2 times

- It is important that your child get all the urine out. Sometimes urinating once is not enough.
- After your child urinates, he or she should get up and do something else for 2 to 3 minutes (sing a song, recite ABCs, or wash hands). Then he or she should sit down and try to urinate again. At first your child might need to go 2 or 3 times before getting completely empty. The more often your child does this, the easier it will be to empty all the way the first time.

### 4. Relax

- Some children get in the habit of straining to urinate. If your child strains to urinate, the muscles that let urine out tighten up. If the muscles are tightened, it is not easy to empty the bladder and your child can get an infection. Encourage your child to sit and wait for the urine to come out on its own.
- You might also ask your child to do one of the following when sitting on the toilet:
  - blow out slowly through a straw, or
  - wave his or her hands in the air.

***If you have any questions, you may contact the Division of Pediatric Urology at (615) 936-1060.***