

“POTTYING 101”



Children and toddlers can be fearful of falling into adult toilets or becoming stuck in the toilet seat. As a result, they brace and support their body with their arms as shown below.

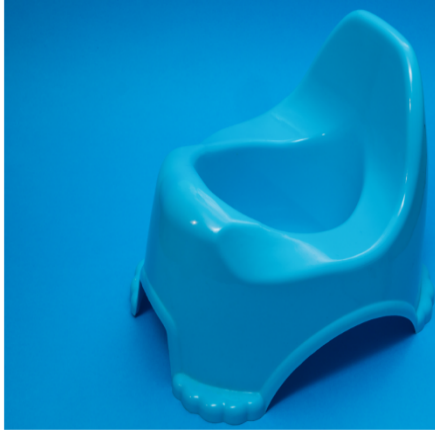
This bracing action can cause them to contract their abdominal and pelvic floor muscles to stop themselves falling into the toilet. Constipation and incomplete bowel emptying can result simply from poor set up and positioning.

BODY positioning:

Feet on the floor, no bracing, back straight

Potty helpers – this helps the kids not brace themselves from falling in the potty or getting stuck to the seat, and thereby contracting the abdominal and pelvic muscles

For toddlers, a floor potty



For older kids, a potty insert



Foot Support (for those little dangling feet)



A step stool will work as well

BODY positioning:



The correct bowel emptying position involves:

- Sitting upright with both hands or elbows on the thighs supporting the trunk.
- Discouraging the child from leaning too far forward during bowel emptying
- Sitting with a straight back and leaning slightly forward.

FUN IDEA!

Make pooping and adventure by decorating your potty seat or step stool for your child. Use a *reward for results* – a clear jar that is visible and is a reminder to motivate your child. You can use a different reward for peeing and pooping success.

How to play the moo to poop game with your child

1. Start out by encouraging the child to take 2-3 deep breaths and watch for their belly to move forward to promote pelvic floor relaxation.
2. Ask the child to say "Mmmm" which uses the muscles that wrap around the waist. These muscles generate pressure within the abdomen for bowel movements and avoiding straining.
3. Say "Oooo" to bulge the tummy forwards which relaxes the anal sphincter for bowel emptying.
4. Say "Mmmm" to push again if further pushing is required.

Never encourage the child to push down through the anus to empty their bowel. Doing this can stretch and strain the pelvic floor and create poor emptying patterns long-term.

Best times of the day for Bowel Emptying in Toddlers and Children

- Immediately following a meal (eating stimulates the bowel)
- When the child demonstrates the need to empty the bowel
- Provide the child with a reward for successful bowel emptying
- Allow 10 minutes sitting (when positioned properly) time on the toilet for children to reduce the risk of pelvic floor strain.

Pooping - What to expect?

Children should ideally poop once daily, formed but soft.

Foods that soften stool typically contain high amounts of fiber and water, which help to add bulk and moisture to the stool, making it easier to pass. Examples include:

- fruits like prunes (bite size ones are just the right size and come in flavors), pears, apples (also apple cider), figs and kiwi,
- vegetables like spinach, sweet potatoes and leafy greens
- whole grains like oatmeal and whole grain bread
- Probiotic-rich foods like yogurt can also help by improving gut health and softening stools.

REFERENCES:

Home pelvic floor exercises in children with non-neurogenic LUT Symptoms: Is fitball and alternative to classic exercises?; Neurourol Urodyn.2022 Oct 8;42(1): 146-152.

Pelvic Exercises Physiotherapy; Michele Kenay, Pelvic Floor Physiotherapist.