What are personal care skills?

Wide range of skills that promote healthy & independent living

- Hygiene Skills
  - Brushing Teeth
  - Washing Hands
  - Bathing/Showering

- Toileting Independently

- Dressing

- Feeding
  - Using utensils
  - Making meals

- Decreased dependence on caregiver support

- Less medical/dental visits & procedures
Today’s Presentation

Toilet Training

Toileting and Hygiene

Broader Hygiene
Toilet Training
Toilet Training

- Independent toileting may come later for autistic children compared to children without autism (average age in non-autistic children is ~3 years)

- Co-occurring global developmental delays and intellectual disability diagnosis may impact timing of toileting success

- It may take longer time of working on toilet training to achieve full control of bladder and bowel movements

- Most children will obtain control for urine before bowel

- Diaper prescriptions may be an option for older children with Medicaid and some private insurances
Medical Considerations

- Constipation is common in early childhood
- Worsened by poor/picky feeding habits
- Pain associated with constipation can create toileting aversions and some children may withhold stool
- Constipation can impede toilet training for both urination and bowel movements
- Severe constipation may require medical intervention
- Consider evaluation by a pediatric gastroenterologist
Ready to toilet train?

- Staying dry overnight and from naps
- Requesting a diaper change (verbally or nonverbally)
- Indicating need to use the potty
- Hiding for bowel movements

Absence of clear signs does not preclude working on some toilet training skills.
Starting Questions for Toilet Training

• Will the individual sit on a potty chair or adult sized toilet? Where is it located?
• If they will sit for a few minutes, have they had a success? Did it seem purposeful or incidental?
• If the individual has had purposeful successes, will the individual go to the bathroom independently but only if taken by an adult?
• Will the individual sometimes go to the bathroom independently, but it is inconsistent?
• Is the individual toileting for urine but not bowel?
• Is the individual toileting in some environments but not others?
• Will the individual use the potty consistently but cannot clean up after?
Sitting

Practice sits

• Start short and build up
• Practice sitting for other activities too!
• Initial sitting does not have to include pulling down pants
  • Progressive removal of clothing (fully clothed, pull-up/diaper only, underwear only, unclothed)
• Use preferred activities to encourage longer sits
• Timed sits

Start with sitting with both males and females (unless male child expresses a preference to stand)
Sitting

Consider comfort preferences & sensory sensitivities
  • Seat temperature
  • Toilet seat covers

Type of seat
  • Potty chair
    • Can vary location
    • If possible, in a bathroom
    • Consider shaping strategies to move the potty chair to a bathroom
  • Toilet insert
  • Adult-sized toilet
Sitting...but no success?

• Transition to regular underwear
  • Promotes recognition of wetting accidents
  • OK to place pull-up over regular underwear

• Select times/dates to actively work on toileting
  • Provide lots of fluids
  • Timed bathroom breaks (every 15-30 minutes)
    • Sit for 5-10 minutes at each bathroom break and provide reinforcing activities
    • If success occurs – party time!
  • If a child has an accident, help build the connection with a sit on the potty
  • Have the child help clean up the accident if they are able

Toilet Training in Less Than a Day – Azrin & Foxx
Sitting...but no success?

• Lots of accidents at this stage are normal

• Have timed bathroom breaks written into your child’s school programming (usually ~1x/hour)

• Stay alert for physical indications of the need to toilet ("potty dance")

• Initial successes may seem accidental—provide praise regardless!

• Common issue: Child holds urine until pull-up or diaper is placed back on
Successful…but always needs prompts

“Prompt-dependency”

Not unique to toileting

Common in new/emerging skills
  • Language (single word to phrases)
  • Anxiety (“deep breath”)

Don’t be discouraged
  • Often a natural part of the progression from absence of a skill to mastering a skill
  • May be an extended phase of skill development in developmental disabilities

Prompt fading
Prompt Fading

• More difficult with toileting than other skills
  • The need to toilet may need to be “caught” by others
  • Timed bathroom breaks may need to stay in place

• Use minimal prompts possible when bringing the individual to the toilet

• Allow individual to participate/perform independently all parts possible
Toileting Regression

- Identify recent stressors

- Normalize the environment (as much as possible)

- Go back to previously used strategies
  - The need for support may ebb and flow (and that is ok!)
Additional Tips/Strategies

• Go slow

• Live modeling by a close relative

• Use visuals to prompt toileting
  • Timers
  • Schedules

• Consider receptive and expressive communication

• Embed toileting visuals into a communication device (for nonverbal or minimally verbal individuals)
Additional Tips/Strategies

• Changing clothes/diapers/pull-ups should be neither positive nor negative
  • Changing after an accident is a “fact of life”
  • Never punish accidents
  • Calm and matter-of-fact language

• Use your team
  • Home caregivers, school, daycare, therapists, etc

• It’s OK to take a break
Sample Visual Schedule

**Visual Schedule**

1. **Sit on toilet**
2. **Wipe until clean**
3. **Flush toilet**
4. **Wash hands**
Sample Visual Schedule
Still struggling with bowel movements

• Make sure feet are on a surface
• Adequate hydration and fiber
• Keep track of bowel movement timing (if child is regular)
  • Timed toilet sits
• Encourage “hiding” in the bathroom
• Diaper dumping
Sensory Sensitivities

- Noise, light

- Aversion to home bathroom
  - Use alternate bathroom
  - Move potty chair to alternate location
  - Consider working on one thing at a time

- Aversion to public restrooms
  - Automatic toilets
  - Loud toilets
  - Automatic sinks
  - Hand dryers
Sensory Sensitivities

• Dim lights at home

• Practice trips to a sensory friendly public restroom

• Alternate bathroom options at school (build into IEP)

• Be prepared with changes of clothes/pulls-ups etc.

• Avoid embarrassment if an accident occurs
Toileting Hygiene

• Potty training for all children comes before adequate ability to clean/wipe after toileting

• Labeling “clean” versus “dirty” visual activity

• Provide specific instruction on amount of toilet paper needed

• Backward chaining

• Continue monitoring until mastered

• Accommodations
  • Baby wipes
Other Hygiene
Encouraging Good Hygiene

• Building hygiene habits
  • Items that need to be used independently on a daily basis
  • Regular washing is of increasing importance over time

• Making a routine = New Visuals and Structure
  • What do I need to do?
  • When tools do I need?
  • When I am finished?

• Consider sensory sensitivities (fragrances, hair washing)

• Consider motor difficulties

• Use routine to build skills
Hygiene Kits

Morning Kit

Bathing Kit

What do I need? What should I do? How do I know when I’m finished?

Build in additional structure
Specific schedule
Break down tasks into smaller parts
Task Analysis with Visuals

Break more complex tasks into smaller parts

Clarify expectations and decrease need to remember all steps.
**Common Hygiene Hang-Ups**

**Bathing:** Use an action schedule that shows which action or step comes next (shampooing and rinsing, body parts to wash). Laminate the schedule so it can hang in the shower.

- Options for hair/body washing
  - Use a pitcher instead of the faucet/showerhead
  - Loofa/washcloth

**Teeth:** A vibrating or weighted toothbrush may help children who have difficulty holding and brushing their own teeth. Use a visual timer so children know for how long to brush.

- Find a special needs dentist in your area
- Slow practice
Resources

*Toilet Training in Less Than a Day* – Azrin & Foxx

*Toilet Training for Individuals with Autism and Related Disorders* – Wheeler

Autism Treatment Network: A Parents Guide to Toilet Training Children with Autism

*Taking Care of Myself* - Wrobel
Thank you