



Toilet Learning at Centennial Montessori

Objective

Adults in the lives of a child who is toilet learning should have one objective (if you choose to accept this mission): *to guide the child to successfully and independently use the toilet.* We practice **toilet learning**, which is child-directed, without reward systems and begins when the child shows signs of readiness and interest. We do not practice **toilet training**, which is adult-directed, often learned through reward systems and may involve a time constraint. Both ways of toileting are directly linked to the child's self-esteem. We believe that toilet learning helps to positively and intrinsically boost the child's self-esteem.

The Key to Success

There are giant milestones that your child will reach during his time here and toilet learning tops the list! There are several factors that coincide with toilet learning but **one** thing to understand and remember:

CONSISTENCY IS THE ONLY THING THAT WILL LEAD TO SUCCESS!!!

By this point, you've heard this over and over in various aspects of CM. However, the most important thing that adults can offer a child during toilet learning is simply this. All caregivers **MUST** be on the same page or else the child is left to interpret different messages, which can slow down or inhibit the process of toilet learning.

What to Look For

Biologically, a child has to develop awareness and control of his sphincter muscles before beginning the process of using the toilet independently. This is most noticeable to adults during diaper changes when the diapers are dry in between changes. Some children display more awareness of their excretions by verbalizing when they have soiled themselves and/or have predictable excretions (i.e. a daily bowel movement after breakfast), which can also be signs of readiness. These meet the developmental components but must be met with a genuine interest and positive attitude about toileting from the child as well. *If a child is resisting to use the toilet, we allow him to naturally gain interest on his own—forcing the child will only make the process miserable and non-successful for all parties.*

Ready, Set, GO!

Once the child shows visible signs of readiness and interest, we are off—**and there's no turning back!** The child is dependent upon the adult to prepare him **everyday** for steps towards independent toilet use. Once the underwear is introduced, it is imperative to keep your child stocked with plenty of underwear and in them at all times. Diapers/Pull Ups can be used during night time sleeping hours, but you should still keep a close eye out for dryness so that you can transition to underwear for the night at the appropriate time as well. Using diapers or Pull Ups for any other reason, even for long trips in the car, communicates a message to the child that he can soil himself rather than have an opportunity to use the toilet. Instead, be sure to allow your child to use the bathroom before getting into the car, plan for stops to use a bathroom on the way and allow him to use the bathroom once you arrive. For adventures outside of the house, always let your child know where the bathroom is so he can know that there is a place for him to go when the time arrives. At CM, you will need to provide several pairs of thick underwear, extra bedding and clothing when your child transitions in the Toddler Community. The Head Guide will communicate to the parents her observations of the child's readiness and schedule a brief meeting to discuss guidelines.

Upon arrival each day, the classroom adults will help the child dress down to a t-shirt and underwear only while in the classroom. The reason for this is to remove any obstacles from the child who is learning how to navigate when it is time to use the toilet. Once the child is successful at getting to the toilet regularly as well as pull his underwear down and up independently, we reintroduce bottoms to the child. During outside play, the children wear bottoms and underwear. Throughout his day, he will be invited to use the bathroom every 30-45 minutes to practice sitting on and eliminating in the toilet. Some children have several accidents in their underwear but enjoy the idea of sitting on the toilet. After any accident, we take the child to the bathroom and allow him to sit on the toilet. This allows the child to understand the purpose of the toilet and where his excrements should go. *This routine tends to take the longest and needs a great deal of patience from all adults involved.* Each time the child uses the toilet, the adult will model how to wipe. We do not do the wiping for the child. However, during messier situations, the adult will assist the child and help clean him as necessary. Again, the end result for this process is independence, which includes all parts of toileting.

Each day, the parents are responsible for restocking their child's extra belongings. The classroom staff will bag soiled belongings in the child's wet bag to be brought home. *Expect to do a lot of laundry during this time!!!*

Because of the frequency of visits to the bathroom, we consider toilet learning a work in and of itself. Therefore, we allow the child all the time he needs to accomplish his tasks. At home, please allow your child the time necessary for independent toilet learning. The children are often eager to do as much as they can on their own and need the adults in their lives to support this. Otherwise it leads to **power struggle=resistance=regression.**

Helpful Hints for the Home

Use positive language/ reinforcement for successful toilet learning. When inviting your child to the toilet, use direct phrases like, "It's time to use the toilet" instead of asking the child "Do you need to use the toilet?" However, if he refuses, you can simply state, "It's okay. We'll try again another time." Explaining to the child that using the toilet is a necessary part of the day is important. This can be done when a child does not want to use the toilet because he is interested in something else. It's

important to invite the child when he is not engaged in something, for example, after he has cleaned up his toys. If he would rather move onto a different activity before using the toilet, you can say things like, "After you use the toilet and go pee, you can get out and play with..." This can help him understand that it is time to try to use the bathroom before moving forward with another activity. A young child just learning independence may need to collaborate in efforts to dress and undress himself. Always demonstrate and use positive words like "Look what you did!" and "You did it!" Avoid statements like "I know you can do it. I've seen you do it before." Sometimes, for a young child who is regularly independent, there are moments where he needs some extra confidence from the adult by applying a finger on the tip of his shoe, etc. Building confidence is vital. Remember, our goal is for the child to say, "I want to do it," "Watch me do it," and "I did it!"

Montessori: Keeping it Real

One of the things you can always expect in Montessori is that the children learn the proper names of things from birth. Toilet learning is no exception. Here is a list of vernaculars that we use during this process (brace yourself because some of this looks a little shocking on paper!):

poop	pee	bathroom/toilet (instead of potty)	toilet learning
penis	vagina	bottom	underwear (instead of undies)

Checklist of Items Needed Daily

What to Bring

- Wet Bag
- 4-5 pairs of toilet learning underwear (these are the thicker ones)
 - 3 complete changes of clothing
- An extra pair of shoes (this is in addition to their inside and outside shoes)
 - An extra set of sheets/blanket for nap

What Not to Bring

- Regular underwear (these come once the child has mastered toilet learning)
 - Diapers/Pull Ups
 - Crocs
- Tight or frilly clothing

Bring it Home!

Buckle up! Toilet learning is a journey that is different for every child. Again, much of the process rests in the consistency from the adults. At any point, if you have questions or concerns, please contact your Head Guide.