

TOILETING STRATEGIES

Some considerations when deciding whether your student is ready to work on independence in toileting.

- Is your student ready to actively participate in a **training program**? Are the caregivers going to establish a regular **toileting routine** to keep him/her dry and comfortable? Are caregivers committed to teaching the student to anticipate the toileting routine in preparation for a training program?
- Does your student show signs of awareness or **discomfort** with a wet or dirty diaper **after** he/she has emptied their bladder or bowels?
- Is your student able to **indicate awareness** of the need to empty his/her bladder or bowels **before** s/he empties them?
- If your student is not showing signs of discomfort or awareness of a wet or dirty diaper, a predictable toileting **routine** could still be started. This could give the student a **regular schedule** to anticipate and eventually participate in.
- If your student is showing signs of discomfort, his/her **communication should be recognized** with a response that names the behavior you are seeing and what you are going to do about it, ("I see you squirming. I think you want to clean up. I'll take you to the bathroom.") If a consistent, predictable response is given to your student's communication signals s/he may learn to use these signals **before** instead of after, s/he has actually emptied his/her bladder or bowels. If such statements are made quietly, (e.g., close to her/his ear), privacy and dignity can be maintained.
- If your student is able to indicate awareness of the need to use the toilet **before** emptying her/his bladder or bowels his/her communication should be **honoured** as indicated above. 1.) Name the communication. 2.) Say what you think s/he is saying. 3.) Say what you are going to do about it. (E.g., "You said 'ba'. I think you mean bathroom. I'll take you to the bathroom so you can use the toilet.")
- It will be useful to **collect data** for monitoring wet and dry periods to determine if there is any pattern to toileting. Observe and record the pattern of wet and dirty diapers or the successful use of the toilet for one week. Use a **Data Collection Sheet for Monitoring Wet and Dry Periods**.
- Begin a **regular schedule** of taking her/him to the bathroom (for a diaper change or opportunity to sit on the toilet), according to the observations and recordings of the pattern of wet or dirty diapers or successful toilet use.

- Consider placing your student on the toilet within 30 minutes after drinking liquids or finishing a meal.
- Consider a medical evaluation if s/he appears to retain fluid for days at a time.
- To reduce the risk of bladder accidents during the night, reduce liquid intake before going to bed, and give the child dinner early in the evening.
- Diet is important when considering bowel movement. Diets containing high amounts of fibre and liquid are recommended for regular, comfortable bowel movements.
- Consider using a "Dri Sleeper", which will give your student and caregivers auditory feedback, (i.e., beeper) when your student is wet during the day or night. This can be useful for determining the pattern of elimination so a schedule or routine can be developed.
- To prompt the student to urinate while sitting on the toilet, try pouring a small amount of tepid water on the pelvic area to give the sensation and sound of urinating. Caregivers can also turn the tap on and let the water run gently while the student is sitting on the toilet.
- During the transition phase, when the student is expected to take more of an active role in toileting, it is important that the team portray an attitude of complete acceptance in handling voiding accidents. A spare set of clothing should always be kept at school, together with other necessary toilet accessories.
- Provide a stress-free and relaxing environment and make the routine as enjoyable as possible, (i.e. play a tape or a sing a song).
- Encourage your student to participate in each step of the toileting routine (e.g., turning on the light in the bathroom, assisting with clothing, reaching for the toilet paper, washing hands etc.).
- Leave your student securely supported on the toilet for no more than about 10 minutes at a time. Secure support is necessary for her/him to relax, and to be safe. Your student's feet should be resting on a footstool or platform with knees at a 90-degree angle.
- Consider beginning this routine at school with input from the family and then transfer parts of it to home as the student begins to have some success in some areas of the toileting program.

