

Self-care

Bottom Wiping



Many children have difficulty with learning to use the toilet independently, particularly wiping their bottom after a bowel movement. This is something that most of us take for granted, but it is in fact quite a complex skill to learn! This involves them being able to reach behind themselves, being able to turn their hand and knowing where to wipe.

General advice

- If your child's feet are not supported by the floor when they are sitting on the toilet, give them a child's step or box to put their feet on. Make sure that your child can reach the toilet roll easily. Keep the floor space clear and free of clutter. Minimise distractions.
- Talk to your child about how much toilet paper to use and show them what is the correct amount. Try to encourage them to use only a few sheets (3) at a time as it can be difficult for the child to feel how they are moving their hands through a large mass of paper. You can mark a X on the perforations to show them where to tear. Make a rhyme – "one square, two squares, three squares – tear".
- Always insist in your child washing and drying their hands after they have been to the toilet. This is vital for hygiene reasons and also provides important practice for your child's development of independence skills in recognising hot/cold taps, turning taps on to an appropriate water flow, testing water temperature, dispensing the correct amount of liquid soap etc.
- If your child often forgets to flush the toilet and wash their hands, try using reminder cards – e.g., a picture or photo of the toilet flush stuck on the wall beside the toilet paper or a picture of hands and a tap stuck to the inside of the door, near the door handle.



Activity ideas

The following activity ideas will help your child to develop these skills.

Body awareness

- Provide a long mirror for you child to dress in front of and play “body awareness” games in front of. For example, ask them to name and touch different parts of their body, front and back whilst looking in the mirror to visually reinforce the physical feedback of touch. Increase difficulty by touching different parts of their body and ask them to touch the same part whilst looking in the mirror.
- Sing action songs that involve touching and moving your body such as “If you’re happy and you know it”, “Head, shoulders, knees and toes”.
- Play Simon Says asking them to move or touch various parts of their body for example: - touch your elbows, shoulder blades or wiggle your toes.

Reaching behind

- Play games sitting or standing back-to-back that involving passing toys or balls back and forwards to each other. Work on improving rotation of your child trunk on both sides by swapping direction and ask them to look and reach behind them.
- Ask your child to roll a large ball around their feet when standing using two hands. Now roll it around their waist without dropping it. Once they have mastered this, they can add rolling around their knees and then passing the ball between their legs in a figure 8 or back-to-back with a partner! They can either stand or sit with their knees bent for extra stability.
- Tuck scarves or ribbons in the back of the waistband of their clothes. Get your child to remove these with either hand and then tuck it back in again, partially at first and work towards fully. They can then work to reaching between their legs to remove the scarf/ribbons. Initially they can use a mirror to help them see.
- Play “Hunt the object” where they sit on the ground and feel for an object behind them on the floor without looking. They can perhaps progress to identifying the object through touch alone!
- Play a “Feel and Find” game. Stick light weight objects to the back of your child’s trousers for them to feel for and pull off. Use sticky tape or masking tape, doubled back on itself with make-up pads, scrunched



Adapted from our colleagues : NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde – KIDS (www.nhsggc.org.uk/KIDS)

tissue/ kitchen paper “balls”, cotton wool or anything similar stuck to the tape. Gradually reduce the size of the objects used as the child's skill develops, finally using small pieces of sticky label.

- Balloon wipe. Attach two inflated balloons together by tying the knots then tape or tie the balloons to the back of a chair to make a pretend bottom. Stick post it notes/stickers between the balloons so your child has to stretch behind them to reach for them whilst sitting on the chair. Try to remove them without looking!



Wiping and folding

Wiping is a crucial part of staying clean. It's always important your child wipes until it's all gone to avoid problems like an itchy or irritated bottom.

- Show your child how to wipe their bottom. It can be helpful to have them put their hand on top of your hand while you wipe their bottom for them. This helps them feel your hand actions and how you are doing it. Then Mum or Dad does the first wipe but your child then tries themselves, so the second, third, fourth wipe etc until clean. You can start with your hand over theirs to guide their hand movements until they improve.
- Smear some peanut butter/chocolate hazelnut spread/ toothpaste onto a plastic plate or a laminated picture of their favourite character's face where they have to wipe it clean to discover who is underneath. Encourage your child to keep the wipe flat and to check the wipe for stains after every wipe. If it's dirty fold wipe and continue or get a new piece of tissue/new wipe. Continue until clean. One they have mastered the plate; you can try a half-inflated balloon or smear some on their non dominant hand/ arm.
- Roll playdough into balls and snakes using fingertips. This will teach them to keep their fingers flat which we need for wiping and strengthen fingers.
- Practice folding paper during crafts such as card making. Practice folding paper or tissue paper in half, showing them how to bring the corners together or drawing a line for them to fold and press down. They can also practice on napkins or face cloths. Make sure you demonstrate what is expected.



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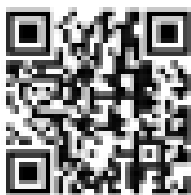
- Encourage your child to help with the household tasks such as wiping the table/worktop, washing dishes, cleaning the sink, polishing/ dusting the furniture, washing the car or their own sit n ride toy, bike or scooter.

Adaptations

- If your child is finding it difficult to maintain their balance, they could try using the bathroom wall for support. Show your child how to face the wall, lean their non-dominant hand against the wall and stand with their legs apart; help them to wipe their bottom using their dominant hand. It may be necessary for your child to take one leg out of their pants and trousers to stand with their feet further apart, giving them a wider base of support.
- If balance and stability is still a problem, some children find it easier to wipe their bottom while still sitting on toilet. To be able to do this properly, it is important that your child has good foot support, either from the floor or a raised step or block.
- Some children find it difficult to wipe themselves properly clean or they do not wipe themselves firmly enough for it to be effective. Wet wipes are thinner than a wad of toilet paper and this makes it easier for the child to gain extra sensory feedback about their hand actions and the amount of pressure they are applying to their bottom. Encourage your child to wipe themselves with toilet paper first and then use wet wipes to give themselves a final clean.
- If your child tells you that they are finding it hard to wipe their bottom in school or they regularly come home with soiled underwear, discuss this with your child's teacher. The school may be able to send an adult to the toilet with your child to help them practice bottom wiping while they are still developing this skill. Use the ERIC QR code below to access their advice page on smearing.

Further resources: click on the links or view through the QR code.

www.nhsborders.scot.nhs.uk/cypot



[Smearing - ERIC](#)

