

Trouble shooting

DSUK's award winning toilet training programme #pants4school aims to have children with Down syndrome in pants for school. Following are some of the common issues parents regularly ask advice on.

Q. My child is dry in the day how can I teach him to be dry at night?

A. Staying dry at night is something that develops naturally over time – it's not something a child can be 'taught' in the same way as daytime toilet training. It depends on how the bladder and kidneys mature, and in children who are toilet trained during the day, this usually happens by around age 5.

If your child is 5 or older, is dry in the day, and still wet at night, this is known as *enuresis*, a medical condition that can and should be treated. This includes children with Down syndrome. There are treatments available, but there are also things you can try at home:

- Make sure your child drinks regularly during the day, with their last drink about an hour before bedtime.
- Encourage them to go to the toilet just before getting into bed.
- You could also try removing their night-time nappy or pull-up and see how they respond.

Further guidance on managing bedwetting can be found on the DSUK website.

Q. How can I get my child to indicate when he needs the toilet?

A. Letting you know they need the toilet (known as self-initiation) usually comes later in the toilet training journey – often around step 4 of DSUK's #pants4school programme, when your child is out of nappies during the day and in pants.

You can help support this stage by:

- Always using clear language or signs when you take them to the potty or toilet.
- Encouraging them to copy your words or signs, with lots of praise when they do.
- Using visuals – try printing pictures of the toilet or potty that your child can point to or hand to you.
- Praising any attempt they make to indicate they need a wee or a poo.
- If they're on a toileting schedule, gradually increase the time between visits. This helps their bladder get used to holding a bit more, which builds stronger 'need to go' signals.

Q. What do I do if my child refuses to sit on the toilet to do a poo?

A. This is more common than you might think – and understandably frustrating. Some children are happy to sit for a wee, but not a poo. Often they'll choose to do a poo in their pants instead.

Here are a few things to consider:

- Your child may be looking for privacy. Some children prefer to go off into another room or hide behind furniture. Try offering them some quiet, private time on the potty or toilet.
- Pooing might feel uncomfortable for them, especially if they're a bit constipated. This can lead them to want to stand up instead, which gives them a feeling of control. If poos seem hard or painful, speak to your GP or pharmacist about a suitable softener.
- It could also be a learned behaviour – in their mind, wees go in the toilet, but poos go in pants.

Try using videos like 'Tom's Toilet Triumph' or a personalised social story to help them understand where poos go. These can be really effective tools for many children.

Q. Why is my child not bothered about being wet?

A. It's really common for children not to be bothered by being wet – you're not alone here! If they were bothered, toilet training might be a whole lot easier.

The first step is helping your child understand the difference between wet and dry:

- You can make it a game – show them a pair of dry pants and a pair of wet ones and help them feel and talk about the difference.
- Keep the focus on praising dry pants.
- If they have an accident, respond calmly and reinforce the message: "wees go in the toilet or potty."
- Praise them when their pants are dry – get them to check with you and celebrate those moments!

We have some great resources around teaching wet/dry, clean/dirty etc on Twinkl.

Q. How important is it for nursery or school to follow the toilet training programme?

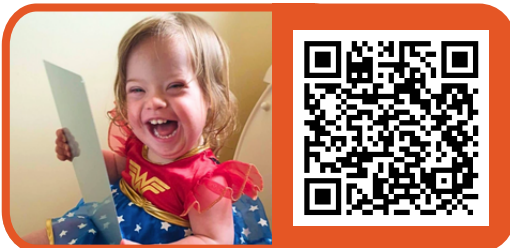
A. Consistency is key to success. Whoever is caring for your child – whether that’s nursery staff, school, a childminder, or a relative – needs to follow the same approach that’s happening at home.

It’s really helpful if everyone understands DSUK’s 4-step toilet training programme #pants4school and the reasons behind it. That way, they can support your child in the same way, every day.

There’s detailed guidance on toilet training available on the DSUK website, and we encourage nurseries and schools to look. Families can also direct settings to Twinkl, where there are a number of useful DSUK resources available.

Links to further information, Facebook groups and resources:

DSUK Website



Toilet Training Group for Under 5



Toileting Group for aged 5+



Twinkl Resources

