

Potty-training pitfalls and how to avoid them

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Starting too early is a common mistake, expert says.

(HealthDay)—Incorrectly toilet training children can lead to problems ranging from bed-wetting and daytime accidents to urinary tract infections, so it's important to get it right, an expert says.

There are a number of common mistakes that [parents](#) make when [toilet training](#) their [children](#), said Dr. Steve Hodges, a pediatric urology specialist at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem, N.C.

Training too early is one mistake. Children younger than 3 don't have the mental maturity to make good toileting decisions. "They don't understand how essential it is to get themselves to a bathroom when nature calls," Hodges said in a Wake Forest news release. "Instead, they hold their urine and feces, which can lead to numerous problems, including bed-wetting."

Holding urine also leads to smaller bladder capacity, Hodges said.

Some parents potty-train their children but don't follow up with their toileting habits. Parents should have children urinate on a schedule, about every two hours, he suggested. To help make the bathroom trips successful, have the child count to 10 while on the potty and have some favorite books and puzzles nearby. Hodges also said that a high-fiber diet can make defecation less painful, so children are less likely to try to avoid it.

Up to 30 percent of children aged 2 to 10 have [chronic constipation](#), but some parents miss the signs of constipation in their children. "Many parents mistakenly believe that if their child has daily bowel movements, they are not constipated," Hodges said. "But in kids, there's a different definition of constipation known as 'poop burden.' It refers to poop backed up in their rectum that can press on the bladder and cause bed-wetting and other problems."

Symptoms of constipation in children include having extra-large bowel movements or [bowel movements](#) that are very firm, rather than mushy; poop accidents; poop-stained underwear; and mild belly pain with no obvious cause, Hodges said.

He also said parents should never ignore signs of bladder trouble, which include painful and frequent urination and blood in the urine. These symptoms could be due to an infection or other problems that should be evaluated by a doctor.

Accidents of urine or stool should not be considered normal and ignored.

"Often, parents have the impression that wetting, like throwing temper tantrums, is just something kids do," Hodges said. "But accidents aren't normal and potty-trained kids shouldn't have accidents any more often

than adults do."

More information: The Nemours Foundation has more about [toilet training](#).

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