

WHEN TO START POTTY TRAINING

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Read this only if you have a child still in diapers. If you do, you will have no qualms about reading about potty and peepee and the works.

The reason I'm writing about this today is because potty training today (like everything else) is very different from what it has been in the past. My mother told me I was potty trained at 9 months. While I believed her, I dropped her [this link](#), which talks about why you shouldn't potty or peepee train so early.

The reason I put off potty training is because I believed (thanks to google search) that babies should not be potty trained until much later and only when they are 'ready'. Most articles online talk about potty training toddlers between two and three when they are capable of pulling off their pants and going to the loo themselves. Many moms have no qualms about leaving their little ones in diapers till then.

While this is a concept popular mainly in the West I do know some moms here in Mumbai too who have started potty training later in the game waiting for their children to be ready or following all the advise meted out by Dr. Google.

This research that says potty training too early will have far reaching consequences and psychologically damage the child is rather new. For most of the decades preceding 1961, parents started potty training very early even in the West.

What changed in 1961?

Disposable diapers flooded the market!

Aah.

Just like when Harvey Kelloggs decided to float the [myth](#) that fiber is good for constipation and convinced generations to eat more fiber, it seems the [disposable diaper industry](#) also had pediatricians suddenly convinced that children needed to wait and wait and wait before they were potty trained.

When Procter & Gamble started test marketing their disposable diapers in 1961, the company began searching for a pediatrician to promote them. They signed up T Berry Brazelton, who began extolling the merits of the company's product and recommending that parents should not begin potty training until children were physically, mentally, and emotionally ready.

Source: [Early start to Potty Training](#) by Linda Sonna.

Think about it. An additional year or two in diapers for every child means burgeoning bottom lines for the big bad MNCs.

When Infant formula was introduced during the industrial revolution in the 20th century, an entire generation of women in the industrialized nations stopped nursing as suddenly research and doctors decided that man made formula was far superior to mother's milk. Lucky for us, breastfeeding is back in fashion eh?

I can keep writing about examples where research has suddenly got skewed in favour of a new breakthrough product launched by the MNCs. Pharma companies are way up there in the game, but instead I'll get back to the topic on hand.

When to start Potty Training?

The short answer? Today! The sooner the better.

Potty training in this context does not mean a two day thing where children are expected to learn overnight but a long drawn process where babies understand at their own pace that I need to eliminate in the potty instead of in my diaper.

While talking to my son I have, without intending to actually teach him, taught him colours. The other day I asked him where is Mr. Red in a singsong voice and he responded by picking out a red block. Encouraged I continued, and he got 4 out of 5 right. I suppose while pointing out cars, or trees, or busses, or the sky I may have mentioned colours and he caught on.

The same goes for Potty training. If you keep taking the child to the potty at regular intervals and clapping your hands when he actually goes there, over time, the child will learn. Then when you actually want to get rid of the cloth or disposable diapers it's far easier as your baby is already warmed up to using the pot.

Disposable diapers have been around for about 3 or 4 decades. Before that mothers who used only cloth *langots* probably got their child potty trained as soon as they possibly could to save on washing and changing the baby every hour or so.

In the evolutionary context I suppose it must have been even sooner as mom and baby were attached. Moms may have sensed when baby needs to eliminate. Plus modern houses have stuff that can get damaged when babies poo or pee on them. **I don't suppose that for most of human history, people were so disgruntled by getting a little baby poo on their clean mud floor do you?**

I normally use only cloth nappies at home. When my son has eliminated I mostly leave him naked from waist down (since weather in Mumbai always permits). This has helped me to notice the signals just before he is about to urinate or poo and I rush him to his seat insert or his baby potty. (It helps not to be squeamish about poo at home) Now I almost always know when he is about to eliminate and I try to get him there on time. The result is, when I haven't been watching him and he eliminates outside of the pot he comes up to me and tells me in his own way, knowing I would want to know immediately. He does not hold yet, but I know it's a matter of time before he begins to hold and tell

me that he wants to use potty.
I will update you on the progress in a follow up post.

I started introducing the potty around 11 months and within a day, my son realized this is where he needs to go poo or pee. There are good days when he has peed 4 times in a row on the potty, and there are days when there are 4 – 5 days in a row where he has pooped on the pot.

A good time to introduce the potty though is about the 6-month mark when the baby starts sitting and her body has started to regularize with the eliminations.

I think a good time to introduce the potty really is when the initial feeling of being always OVERWHELMED with the onslaught of work surrounding a newborn has died down. When it's sunk in that the baby is here, and I am a grown adult, I can handle this, is when you should consider introducing the potty. For some this happens at 3 months, for some at 6 months, for some later.

Sometimes, mom knows best, not skewed research. The generation of women before me, my mum, my MIL, my aunt, all told me I should start at 6 months but I turned to Google. (I who should have known better)

Thanks mom! For the advice and the love!

Thanks for reading; what are your thoughts on Potty training your little one?

Recommended Reading: Early start to potty training by Linda Sonna, link on left side panel

