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Parent Guide: Understanding Toileting Challenges in Children

Toilet training can be a significant milestone for both children and parents. Typical toileting development occurs between ages 1-7 years, with most children expected to be daytime toilet trained by the time they start school. While every child develops at their own pace, some may face challenges that make the process more difficult. Understanding these challenges can help you support your child more effectively.

Common Difficulties Observed During Toilet Training

1. **Resistance to Using the Toilet**
 - Fear of the toilet or the flushing sound.
 - Preference for wearing diapers or pull-ups.
 - Avoidance of sitting on the potty or toilet.
 2. **Inconsistent Success**
 - Accidents even after successful attempts.
 - Difficulty recognising the urge to go.
 3. **Constipation or Discomfort**
 - Withholding stool due to discomfort or fear.
 - Complaints of tummy aches or painful bowel movements.
 4. **Nighttime Challenges**
 - Staying dry at night even after daytime success.
 5. **Behavioural Concerns**
 - Refusing to communicate the need to use the toilet.
 - Frustration or meltdowns during toileting routines.
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Signs Your Child May Be Struggling With Toilet Training

- **Physical Signs**
 - Frequent accidents despite consistent attempts.
 - Difficulty with balance or coordination when sitting on the potty.
 - Ongoing issues with constipation or diarrhea.
- **Emotional Signs**
 - Anxiety or fear associated with the bathroom.
 - Extreme frustration or avoidance of toilet-related tasks.
- **Developmental Signs**
 - Difficulty following simple instructions related to toileting.



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- Trouble pulling down/up pants or managing other clothing.
- Difficulty/ refusal with wiping.

How can OT help?

- **Adapt the Environment:** Identify suitable tools to make the bathroom accessible and child-friendly.
- **Teach Body Awareness:** Help your child recognise when to use the toilet.
- **Practice Clothing Skills:** Use simple exercises to improve dressing skills (e.g. pulling pants up and down.)
- **Visual Supports:** Introduce picture charts to simplify the toileting process.
- **Sensory Support:** Address sensitivities like noise or texture to make toileting more comfortable.

And More!

If you notice ongoing struggles or have concerns about your child's toileting progress, **we're here to help!** Chat with your occupational therapist about strategies tailored to your child's needs. Together, we can support your child in achieving toileting success!