

Diapering and Toileting

The procedures and rituals used in diapering and toileting are designed to create positive experiences for your child, as he or she becomes aware of natural bodily functions. A calm, positive attitude is of utmost importance in diapering and toileting.

Much of what is done in diapering is out of respect for the child's growing need for independence. The child is invited to get a diaper from his or her cubby and bring it to the bench where we change diapers. The child stands as the teacher changes the diaper because this encourages greater participation in manipulating his or her clothing. At each diaper change, the teacher invites the child to sit on the toilet. This gives the child an opportunity to practice all of the skills involved in toileting. Often the children are very interested in using the toilet when they see other children using it, but sometimes they are not at all interested! This invitation is simply an early introduction and is never forced.

You may have already noticed on your visits to the Toddlers' House that many children spend their morning in a t-shirt and underpants. Diaper companies now create diapers that are very good at keeping children dry. Unfortunately, this means that children do not always recognize when they are wet. Just as we invite children to begin sitting on the toilet before they are showing signs of readiness for successful toileting, we are also happy to have your child wear either underpants or a cloth diaper during their school day. Because of the nature of our child centered environment we can easily accommodate the need to change wet clothing throughout the morning and our wet vacuum allows us to calmly accept and clean urine from the carpet as well as the floor. During the period of time that they are learning about being wet and dry it is not necessary for you to have them wear underpants outside of school. Your part of this early commitment will be washing the soiled and wet underpants we send home. This early use of underpants allows the child more independence and more feedback about being, wet, soiled or dry.

Whether your family has chosen to keep your child in underpants or diapers during the learning part of toileting, at some point we will let you know (or perhaps your child will make it clear to all of us) that he or she is ready to wear underpants all of the time. There are a number of signs of readiness to use the toilet: being aware of wetness versus dryness, being consistently troubled by a wet diaper, being dry for long periods of time, requesting underpants, and occasionally having successful attempts in the toilet. When your child is showing these signs of readiness, the teachers will consult with you about changing to cotton underpants. If your child has already been wearing them at school, we will let you know that we think it is time for him or her to wear them at home too. Keep in mind that this is a transition and that your child may request to wear a diaper during a nap, at night, or at other times. This changing between underwear and diapers will be led by the child's needs, and so we honor their requests to wear one or the other and we are prepared with both as well as plenty of patience and understanding!

Once your child is ready for underpants, please do not use "pull ups." They are so similar to diapers that they are confusing for the child and may delay the toileting process. The teachers can show you examples of underwear that we have found to be quite easy for the children to manage on their own. During cold weather, sweatpants or loose-fitting clothing can be worn as outer clothing. No overalls or dresses please. An adequate supply of clothing changes should be sent to school. Your child's teacher will suggest how much clothing to send. Soiled clothing will be sent home daily. Please return the same number of clothing changes the next day.

The teacher will confer with you about the supportive adult attitude, appropriate language, and scheduling. It is important to remember that the child will let us know when he or she is ready to begin toileting. Toileting is a complicated skill that requires time, practice, and patience.

Sometimes patience on the part of the adults might be the most important part of the process! Children in this age group are very interested in making their own choices, if they think the adults are really invested in toileting success, they may resist. If we as caregivers allow the process to unfold at the child's pace, the child will feel more responsible for the process, and ultimately be pleased to take responsibility for toileting.