

Once the child is happily sitting on the toilet with a nappy on to poo, strategies can then be put in place to help removal of the nappy including such things as:

- Placing the nappy under the toilet seat so the child can still feel it. Then over a period of time the nappy is lowered, so it is not touching their bottom and eventually removed all together. In some cases we have replaced the nappy with toilet paper and this worked equally well.
- Using increasingly smaller sized nappies until eventually the child is told that as there were no longer any nappies that fitted him/her, he/she has to start opening their bowels on the toilet without the nappy as they are now a 'big' boy/girl.
- Putting the nappy on without fastening, the nappy is eventually then replaced by kitchen roll and then toilet paper until that is reduced to a couple of sheets before being removed completely.
- Cutting a hole in the nappy which is increased in size until the child is actually opening their bowels through the hole.

This problem often does seem as though it becomes a battle of wills – but if you have a clear consistent approach, with lots of praise you will not only win the battle but also the war! It may be useful to have a clear timescale and outcome for the programme so everyone knows what they are aiming towards.

For further information or advice contact Bladder and Bowel UK

Bladder and Bowel UK, working under the umbrella of Disabled Living, provides impartial advice and information regarding resources, products and services for children and adults with bladder and bowel problems

www.bladderandboweluk.co.uk

Helpline: 0161 607 8219

Bladder and Bowel UK
Les Eaves - Illustrations

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Understanding Toilet Refusal – the child who will only poo in a nappy

Information for families



Q. My son aged 3 years will use the toilet to have a wee but will only open his bowels into a nappy. Do you think there is something wrong with him?

A. This is a very common problem in children of this age. We are not quite sure why some of them do it – it may be just a reluctance to dispense with the last vestiges of babyhood, like giving up the bottle or the dummy, or there may be other problems such as constipation. Also modern disposable nappies prove to be quite a convenient portable toilet!

In the majority of cases there are usually no underlying problems and it is just down to the child preferring to use the nappy. However, we always suggest a quick check up by a healthcare professional (such as your Health Visitor), to not only exclude any underlying problem that may be the cause of your child's reluctance, but also to help you manage the problem more effectively.

Q. I have tried not giving him a nappy but he makes such a fuss and refuses to go on the toilet that I am scared he will develop constipation which will make the matter worse.

A. Children are quite capable of holding on to their poo for quite a considerable time and in some cases this does make the child constipated. If you think this has happened do speak to your local healthcare professional who can suggest a simple laxative treatment which will help resolve the constipation.



In order to prevent constipation developing therefore we need to meet the child half way so they still feel in control.

What we suggest is the following programme:

- The child is allowed to have a nappy put on to open their bowels, but the nappies need to be kept in the bathroom.
- The child is then taken to the bathroom to have the nappy put on and then remains there until they have done their poo – you can leave him/her with a book or favourite toy
- The nappy is then removed and the child encouraged to help empty the poo into the toilet – because that's where poo goes! They then flush the toilet and wash and dry their hands.
- It is also important that the child has the nappy put on and taken off while they are standing up. This then enables them to take an active part in the process and also enables them to help with the learning about bottom wiping, which they could not do if they were lying down! (This also makes it easier to do if you are out and about.)
- Once the child is in a routine of going to the bathroom to have the nappy put on, the programme is moved forward by only allowing the nappy on if the child will then sit on the toilet.
- Stickers/rewards etc can be used to encourage this stage of the programme.