

Toileting

for the child with cerebral palsy



Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy



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TOILETING

for the child with Cerebral Palsy

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F *Foreword*

Barely three decades ago, the majority of children with severe developmental disabilities like cerebral palsy were regarded as ineducable. However, in the last few years, there has been a marked increase in the awareness of cerebral palsy and its implications. The most significant realisation has been the fact that the education of a child with a disability is not concerned merely with his intellectual development. The management of a child in every sphere of daily living is of equal importance. Consequently, an interdisciplinary and integrated approach is essential for achieving the maximum progress of a child.

Parents play a primary role in teaching their child the various skills of daily living. Undoubtedly, the parents have the best understanding of their disabled child, but they may often be unaware of the best way to go about this enormous task.

The Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy (IICP) is the training and research division of the Spastics Society of Eastern India. The need for more information on cerebral palsy has long been felt both by parents and professionals. With this objective in mind, the IICP has planned to produce a series of books and booklets, written by a team of special educators, therapists and social workers. It is hoped that the easy to follow guidelines and illustrations will help parents in the daily management programme of their child.

A disabled child has the desire as well as the ability to learn different skills. With time, effort and constant encouragement, he will eventually achieve results to the best of his ability.

INTRODUCTION

A mother starts training her baby to use the toilet at regular intervals fairly early in the baby's life.

She usually starts by taking him regularly to the toilet until the child can go on his own.

If your child is handicapped, he may find it a problem to use the toilet on his own without your help. However, if you start teaching him from an early age, he may learn to become more confident about using the toilet independently.

There are two kinds of problems that your child may face when he is learning to use the toilet.

The first problem is physical. This means that your child may be unable to go to the toilet independently. He may be unable to squat or even sit on an ordinary toilet seat. He may also have problems in washing himself after using the toilet.

The second problem involves his level of understanding. This means that he may not have the ability to understand where or when or how he should use the toilet.

Part A of this booklet ('Positioning') discusses the physical problems and suggests some ways in which you can deal with them.

Part B of the booklet ('Learning to use the Toilet') gives some suggestions for teaching your child how to use the toilet.

PART A

POSITIONING

Choosing a position which enables a handicapped child to use the toilet with minimum or no help is very important.

If you start seating your child correctly from the beginning, it will be easier to teach him to use the toilet.

Before you start teaching him to use the toilet, teach him to sit comfortably in a good position on any chair. This will help him to sit on the toilet seat without any fuss.

It is important to provide a suitable and comfortable toilet seat for your child from the beginning.

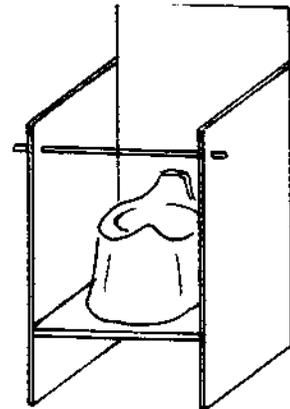


There are several kinds of toilet seats. You should choose one for your child that is:

- i) suitable for his physical abilities and needs

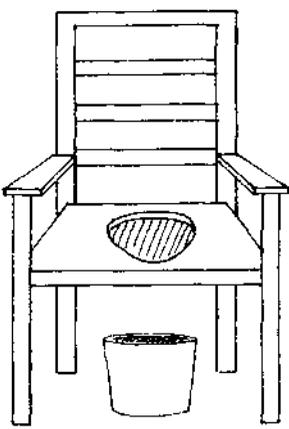


- ii) suitable for her age



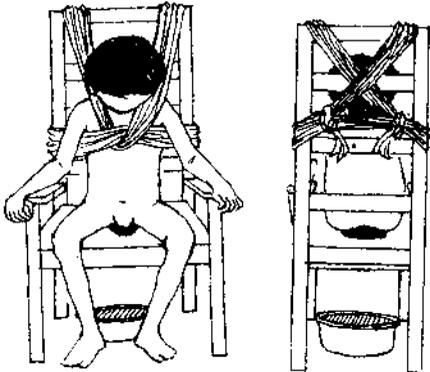
- iii) convenient to fit into your home

A cane toilet chair. This is easily available in the market.

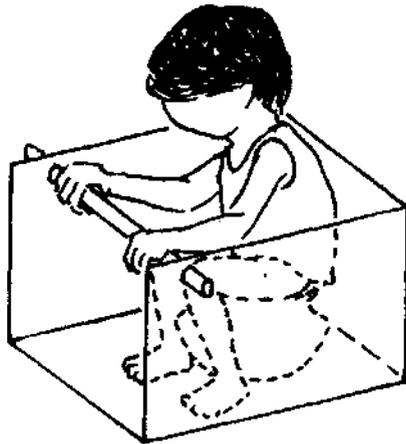
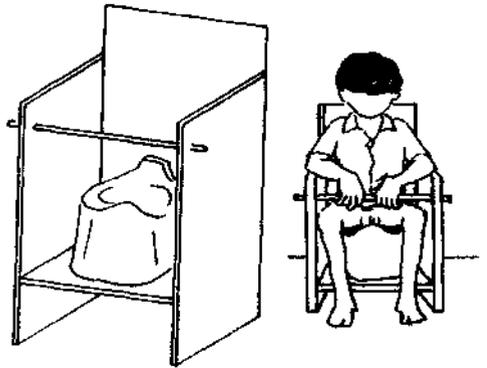


A wooden toilet chair. You can make this easily by using an old wooden chair. Cut a hole on the seat and place a bucket or tin under it.

If your child is unsteady when you seat him, you can tie him to the potty chair with a saree or dupatta to ensure that he does not fall.



A box type potty chair. This is a plastic potty seat mounted on a wooden chair with high sides. This will prevent your child from falling sideways.



An earthen pot or a plastic potty placed in a wooden box will provide support on all three sides.

If your child tends to fall forward, insert a rod, which can be removed when necessary, through two holes made on both sides of the wooden box.

You can safely leave your child on any of the above seats and continue with your household work.



SEATING FOR OLDER CHILDREN AND ADULTS

If your son or daughter can sit either independently or by holding on to a support, you can use normal toilet facilities.

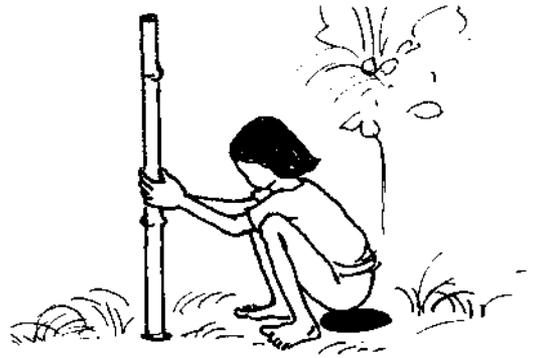
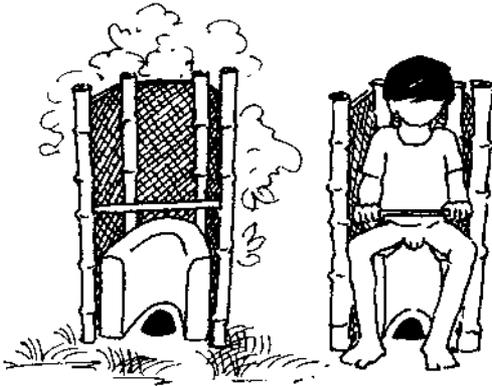
Some adaptations may have to be made to the toilet in order to allow him to use it on his own.

If your house has an Indian style toilet and your son has a problem squatting over it, you can attach a rail to the side wall. He can hold the rail to squat safely and comfortably.



If your older child is unable to squat on the Indian style toilet, place a stool or a chair with a hole cut out on the seat. He can sit on this when he uses the toilet.

If your toileting area is out in the open, you can fix a bamboo pole into the ground. Your child can hold this as a support.

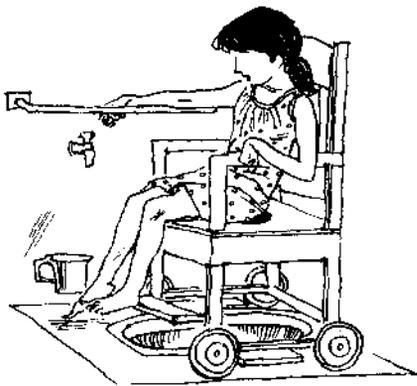


If your son or daughter needs more support, you can build back and side supports with bamboo around a mud and brick structure. A bamboo or a wooden bar can also be added across the front so that the child does not fall forward.

If your house has a western type toilet, you can attach a bar to the side wall. This will assist your older child to get on and off the seat and hold himself steady while sitting. If his feet are not flat on the floor, put a low stool so that he can rest his feet.



If your child needs more support, you can cut a hole on an ordinary wooden chair, attach wheels and slide it over a western style toilet



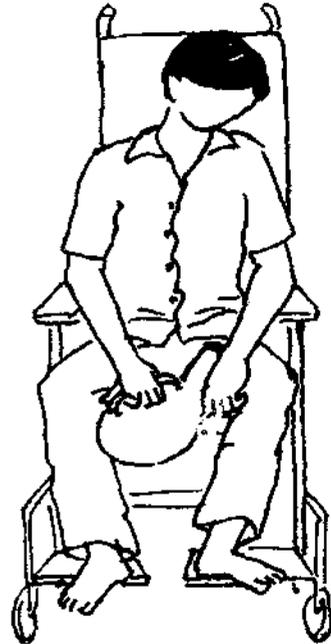
or an Indian style toilet.

Sometimes it is convenient to use a portable urinal or a clean bottle for severely handicapped boys who are wheelchair bound.



For boys who are heavy and unable to move from the wheelchair to the toilet seat independently, a bottle or urinal can be held on the wheelchair itself. The individual can also be taught to hold it himself when he wants to urinate.

It can be cleaned by someone else later.



WASHING AFTER USING THE TOILET

Many handicapped children find it a problem to wash themselves after using the toilet. In order to become as independent as possible, it is important that we start teaching a child to wash himself as early as possible.

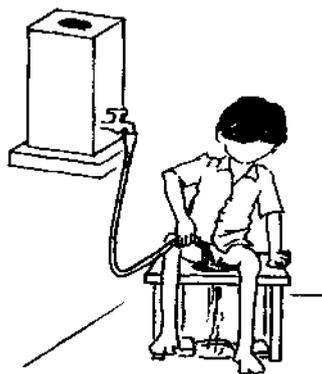
A young child needs help to clean himself after he has used the toilet. But he should be allowed to participate in the washing.

For a youngster who squats on an Indian style toilet with support, cleaning and washing can be difficult as both the hands are not free.

Remember it is always easier to wash herself from the front in between the legs than it is from behind. You can use a stool which has a hole cut in it. This will leave her hands free and enable her to clean herself.



If your child uses a toilet chair or a western style toilet, teach him to wash himself with a mug of water from a bucket or a tap.



If there is no tap nearby, store water in a bucket or a tin with a tap. Attach a pipe to this tap. The child can use the pipe to wash himself with one hand.

He can clean himself by using toilet paper.

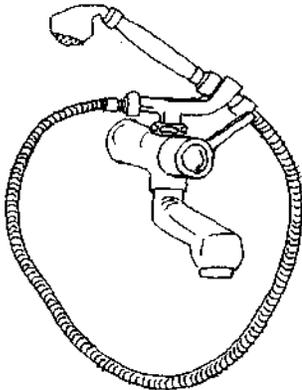
She can hold a mug of water with one hand and splash the water. Then with the same hand, she can clean herself. This can be repeated until she has cleaned herself.



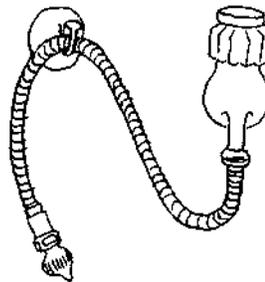
He can wash himself under a tap in a crawling position.



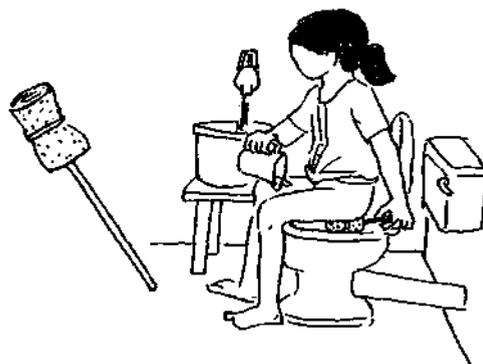
We normally do not wash ourselves with the right hand. However, the right hand may be the more able hand in the case of your handicapped child. Allow him to use it as it will give him some independence.



Alternatively, a commercially available telephone shower or bottom washer can be used.



If she finds it difficult to reach her bottom with her hand, use a sponge attached to a long handle.



Remind your child to clean the sponge after using it each time.



Also remember to teach your child to wash his hands with soap and water every time he uses the toilet.

PART B

LEARNING TO USE THE TOILET

Parents teach their children to use the toilet from an early age. You may have been unable to manage this because of your child's physical *or* mental handicap (lack of understanding). You will find it easier to teach him to use the toilet if you do it step by step.

First step

Write down the time when he wets himself daily, for a period of one week. Make a chart like the one below to record the time.

TIME								
DATE								
1st								
2nd								
3rd								
4th								
5th								
6th								
7th								

Remember

- You must watch him over a period of at least seven days, for five to six hours each day, preferably during the morning.
- By doing this, you will get an idea of the number of times your child needs to go to the toilet for urinating or passing stool.

Once you have collected the information, your chart may look something like the one given below.

TIME								
DATE								
1st	6.30 *P	7.20 *u	9.00 *u	10.15 *u	11.30 *p	12.30 *u		
2nd	6.45 *u	7.50 *u	9.15 *u	10.30 *u	11.45 *u	1 p.m. *p		
3rd	6.00 *u	6.30 *p	8.00 *u	9.30 *u	11.00 *u	12.10 *u	1 p.m. *u	
4th	6.30 *p	7.40 *u	9.30 *p	10.30 *u	12.30 *u	1p.m. *u		
5th	7.00 *u	8.15 *u	9.45 *p	11.00 *u	12.30 *u	1.10 p.m. *u		
6th	6.30 *u	8.00 *p	9.30 *u	11.10 *u	12.45 *p	1.30 p.m. *u		
7th	6.00 *u	7.30 *u	9.00 *p	11.00 *u	12.10 *u	1.15 p.m. *p		

* p= potty
* u= urine

Second step

Study the chart and note the intervals at which your child passes urine. The chart may show that the child passes urine every one to one and a half hours. So put your child on the toilet seat at an hourly interval regularly.

You can start on a successful note, if you put him on the toilet seat immediately after he wakes up and half an hour after he eats. He will probably pass urine at those times.

Most children cry when they are seated on the toilet seat for the first time. Put him on the toilet seat and do not take him off even if he cries.

Ensure that he is comfortable and secure. Refer to the earlier section of this booklet to help you choose a suitable toilet seat for your child.

Keep him on the toilet seat for at least five minutes at a time. As soon as you take him off the toilet seat, give him something he likes. This can be a hug and a kiss from you or something he loves to eat or even a favourite toy. This will help him to understand that he has done the right thing.

Put him on the toilet seat every hour if possible. This will help him to get used to the toilet seat faster.

Remember that he may not pass urine or stool in the toilet in the beginning. But do not give up. He will soon learn if he is put on the toilet seat regularly.

Third step

In the beginning your child may wet himself before you can take him to the toilet or as soon as you take him off the toilet.

If he wets himself when he is not on the toilet, scold him so that he realises that he has done something wrong.

A child who is very mentally handicapped may not understand when you scold him. In such a case, ignore him by leaving him alone for about 10 minutes or by not talking to him.

Fourth step

You can teach him to tell you when he wants to go to the toilet by:

Saying a word like 'susu' or any other word or by making a sign. You must make the sign every time, before you take him to the toilet. He will learn to make it by imitating you.



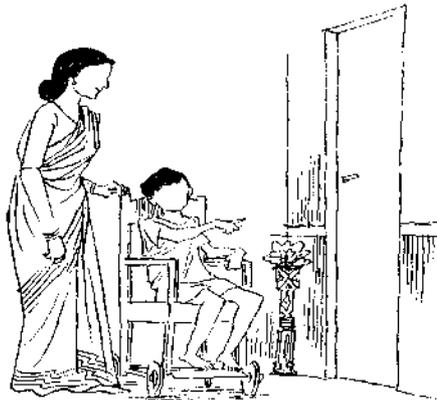
If he is unable to talk, he can learn to use a gesture or a sign like raising a finger, to indicate his need to go to the toilet.

If he cannot do it initially, help him by saying the word yourself or making the sign and then waiting for him to copy you.



You can also take his hand and physically help him to make the sign.

Or he can tell you when he wants to use the toilet by pointing towards the bathroom.

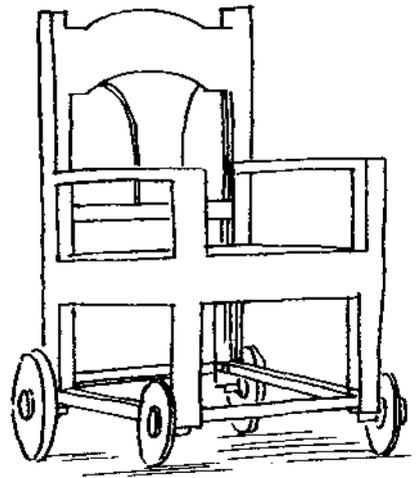


Fifth step

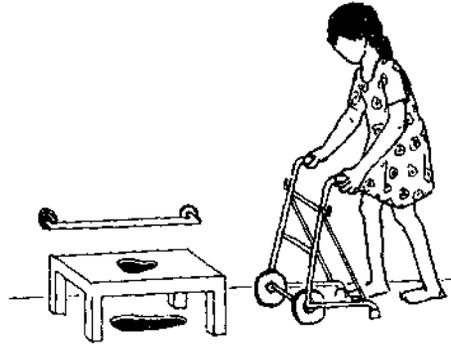
Encourage him to go to the toilet on his own in whatever way he may be able to:

- **Walking**
- **Crawling**
- **Bottom shuffling**

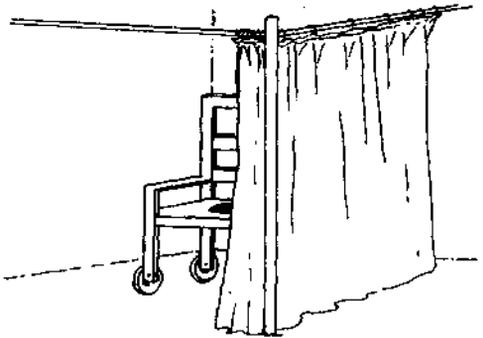
If he is unable to go on his own, he should be encouraged to use an aid such as a wheelchair or a chair with castors.



A rolator or a walker can also be used.



All toilets may not be accessible by a wheelchair or a rolator either because the bathroom is outside the main house or the house is too small to move a wheelchair or walker in- it.



In such cases, you can keep the toilet chair within the house.

Choose a corner of a room or a verandah to place the toilet chair. Put a screen around the toilet for privacy.

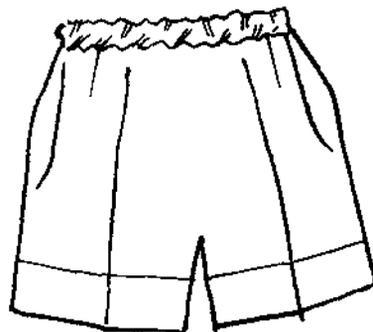
Do not move the toilet chair from place to place. Keep it in a definite place. This will help your child to understand that he should toilet in only one place.

Sixth step

Teach your child to take off and put on his pants and underpants. He should learn to take off and put on his pants before and after he uses the toilet. You can make it easier for him by:

Using elastic or zips on his pants instead of buttons. Refer to the booklet 'Dressing' for details.

With severely subnormal children, it is better not to teach this skill as they may take off their pants even when it is not required.



Seventh step

Teach him to leave the toilet clean by:

- Pouring water or pulling the flush after using the toilet.
If the toilet area is in the open, he should cover with soil.
- Cleaning the toilet seat.
- Washing his hands.

BED WETTING

The steps mentioned above are useful for teaching the child to become toilet trained during the waking hours only. If he wets himself during his sleep, then other measures need to be taken.

If your child wets his bed, you can try and control it by:

- a) reducing his water intake in the evening
- b) taking him to the toilet just before he goes to sleep and once in the middle of the night.

If your child still wets at night in spite of these precautions, try to ensure that he does not wet his clothes. Pad him inside his pants with an old towel or a thick cloth and put a plastic panty over it. This will soak the urine and prevent the outer clothes from getting wet. Put a rubber or a plastic sheet over the bed and cover it with a cloth. This will prevent the mattress from getting wet.

Remember

- Teaching your child to use the toilet independently will take time.
- Some children, owing to their physical or mental handicap, may never learn to use the toilet totally on their own.
- Teach a child as much as he can learn, according to his ability.