



Frequently Asked Questions about Elimination Communication

What is Elimination Communication (EC)?

Just as parents learn to read their baby's signs for sleep and hunger, they can also learn to read their baby's signs for needing to eliminate. In fact, most parents already know what some of these signs are, such as the straining facial expression or the telltale grunting and bearing down that precede a soiled diaper. Practicing Elimination Communication (EC) is just a matter of responding a little differently to these signals from your baby. Taking your baby to the potty can be easy and rewarding!

Why EC?

A few common reasons that parents choose to practice EC are: to recognize and respond to baby's self-awareness; to promote close communication between child and parent; to prevent diaper rash; to avoid struggles often associated with diaper changing and toilet training; and, as side benefits, to save money and use fewer environmental resources.

Don't the experts warn against potty training babies before they are ready?

It's important to note that this is Elimination Communication, not training. This is a gentle process that follows the infant's cues and needs, and is never coercive or punitive. As such, this practice is consistent with the baby's development and maturity.

How do I know when to offer the potty?

As a culture we have been taught to ignore the signals babies give when they need to eliminate. You can learn when it is time to offer the potty much the way you learn when to offer the baby a chance to eat or sleep - by picking up on signals such as fussiness, distractibility, and vocalizations. By choosing to consider these signals in a new way, you will gradually be able to recognize your baby's signals and patterns.

Does this mean that you never use diapers?

EC can be done with or without diapers. Many parents practicing EC do use diapers or training pants for backup or during certain times of the day. Whether a baby wears diapers or underwear, parents change them quickly whenever wet or soiled so that the child stays accustomed to the feeling of clean underclothes.

If a baby doesn't wear a diaper, isn't it very messy?

Often when people first hear of the idea of a baby using the potty (and not using diapers) they wrongly assume it will be a messy process. In fact, parents who diaper their baby spend a lot more time in contact with their baby's bowel movements than EC'ers do. EC'd babies will have the occasional BM that doesn't go in the potty, but diapered babies have their BMs in their pants every time and parents spend a lot of time wiping those BMs off their babies bottoms. A bowel movement in the toilet or potty is flushed or washed down, and wiping a bottom after a BM in the toilet takes all of one second and one small wipe. Also, EC homes have no stinky diaper pail.

How can I find out more?

Come join us for a local meeting! We can answer questions about: how to get started, specific positions for holding the baby, starting with older babies, recognizing and responding to our intuitive sense, and how to help keep baby interested in using the potty throughout various stages of development. There are also many good resources online and in print. For a full list, please see our Articles and Links sections and get in touch with your local DiaperFreeBaby contact.