

# Research study: Whistle away the need for diapers

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Western babies are potty trained later these days and need diapers until an average of three years of age. But even infants can be potty trained. A study by researchers at Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg, Sweden, followed 47 infants and their mothers in Vietnam – where potty training starts at birth and the need for diapers is usually eliminated by nine months of age.

Not only does eliminating the need for diapers save money and remove one practical chore for parents, but the baby's ability to control its bladder improves efficiency and reduces the risk of [urinary tract infection](#).

International research shows that Western babies are being potty trained later these days and average 3-4 years of age before they can take care of their own toileting needs. The situation in [Vietnam](#) is just the opposite.

Researchers at Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg, followed 47 Vietnamese mothers for two years to study their potty training procedure, which begins at birth and generally eliminates the need for diapers by nine months of age. The technique is based on learning to be sensitive to when the baby needs to urinate.

"The woman then makes a special whistling sound to remind her baby," Anna-Lena Hellström says. "The whistling method starts at birth and serves as an increasingly powerful means of communication as time goes on."

According to the study, women notice signs of progress by time their babies are three months old. Most babies can use the potty on their own by nine months of age if they are reminded, and they can generally take care of all their toileting needs by the age of two.

"Our studies also found that Vietnamese babies empty their bladders more effectively," Professor Hellström says. "Thus, the evidence is that potty training in itself and not age is the factor that causes [bladder control](#) to develop."

[Swedes](#) have grown accustomed to the idea that babies cannot be potty trained, but that parents need to wait until they are mature, usually when they decide that they no longer want [diapers](#). The evidence from Vietnam demonstrates that more sophisticated communication between [parents](#) and their babies would permit potty training to start and be completed much earlier.

**More information:** The study, entitled Vietnamese Mothers' Experiences with Potty Training Procedure for Children from Birth to 2 Years of Age was published in *Journal of Pediatric Urology*.

Provided by University of Gothenburg

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