

Temper Tantrums

How to deal with them

Does your child have temper tantrums? Many do between the ages of 18 and 36 months.

Children may get angry when they can't have something or can't do something they want, like go out to play.

They may yell, cry, hit things. They may deliberately bang their head against a wall, or fall to the floor, or hold their breath.

Why do children do this?

By 18 to 24 months, children know that you make rules and set limits. Don't be surprised if they try to control and influence you.

A temper tantrum is one way they try to get you to change your mind or to do something they want you to do.

Children this age are able to get angry. And they are much better at getting upset than at calming down. This is because of the way their brain is developing.

On Back

There are some steps you can take to help you and your child through this stage.

A publication of the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development made possible with help from the Frank and Theresa Caplan Fund For Early Childhood Development and Parenting Education.

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You & Your Child



How to deal with them

Set limits for your child

Life is full of “do’s” and “don’ts,” “cans” and “can’ts.”

Teach your child which things are “yes” and which are “no.”

Make rules reasonable and clear. Talk about the rules. Make sure your child understands them.

If your child throws a tantrum, make sure he or she is safe

Always keep your child away from dangerous situations, such as sharp objects.

Remain calm and in control

If your child is out of control, you must stay calm. There is no need to yell, explain, or plead. A child throwing a tantrum probably won’t listen anyway.

There really is no need to say anything during the tantrum. Just wait. Many parents feel embarrassed if a tantrum is thrown in public. Don’t worry. It has happened to most parents.

Don’t punish or hit your child

You may feel angry and frustrated, but spanking may make your child more upset.

Try “planned ignoring”

Step a few feet away from your child and turn your head and body the other way, watching out of the corner of your eye to make sure your child is safe. This is called “planned ignoring.”

You deliberately pay no attention to a child who is having a tantrum. You are not allowing your child to control you or make you upset.

Don’t give in until the tantrum is over, except if your child might get hurt.

Try holding your child if ignoring doesn’t work

Pick up your child and hold him or her firmly, just enough to keep the child’s arms and legs still.

Do nothing but hold your child until he or she calms down. Don’t talk or become upset. This may take 10 or 15 minutes or sometimes longer.

Wait until your child has been quiet for 10-20 seconds before doing anything else

If you do something too soon, your child may think that the tantrum worked. Teach that peace and quiet is what gets results.

As your child quiets down, hold him or her more gently. You might even cuddle.

Teach your child what he or she should have done

For example, if your child had a tantrum because he or she wanted a cookie, teach that saying, “Cookie please” or even just, “please,” will work better.

If you can’t do what your child wants, say so calmly and with good humor. If your child can’t have a cookie, say so with a smile: “No, we can’t have a cookie today.” Then start another activity.

Keep In Mind

- Tantrums are common among young children. They are part of a child’s newfound anger, a way to react to discipline and limits.
- But children must learn that tantrums don’t work. They must not control you.
- You must stay calm, even when your child isn’t.

