



Rough Play

What to do about those scary dream

You & Your Child

A guide for new parents

Children, especially those of preschool age, are very active. Sometimes their play can get rough.

Rough play might include pretending to fight and to wrestle. Although this type of play may sometimes appear to be serious, you can usually tell if they are really fighting. Playing children usually smile. Children in a real fight usually wear an angry or mean face.

Rough play for children this age is not unusual. They are just beginning to realize they have physical power and strength. Most of the time, rough play is harmless fun.

But don't count on children to understand when play is getting too rough. It is up to you to help them learn the limits of play.

And it is up to you to put an end to rough play when it gets out of hand – especially if there is a risk of someone getting hurt.

ON BACK
ROUGH PLAY AND WHAT YOU CAN DO TO KEEP IT UNDER CONTROL



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WHAT TO DO WHEN PLAY GETS OUT OF CONTROL

Rough play has a purpose

Preschoolers like physical activity and usually want to play rough sometimes. This is natural and not all bad.

- Rough play helps children explore and understand their developing physical strength.
- Rough play provides an outlet for active children, especially young boys. Children usually become less active as they mature.
- Children like to feel control over their bodies. Rough play lets them feel more power and control over their surroundings.
- Children see and experience a lot of aggression around them. Rough play, if under control, can help them enact and figure out aggression in a safe setting.
- Rough play can be an outlet for children to express feelings of anger and excitement that they may have trouble expressing verbally.

But children don't understand that rough play also has limits

Because they don't yet know their own physical strengths, children can easily push rough play too far and lose control.

Young children also don't understand that someone can get hurt when play gets too rough.

Teach your child what are dangerous behaviors

Your child needs to learn that certain activities can hurt people.

Use the word "dangerous" to describe things that your child should not do. For example, if your child wants to jump on your stomach when you are lying down, say, "No jumping on me, please. It is dangerous."



WHAT TO DO WHEN PLAY GETS OUT OF CONTROL

Teach safe rough-and-tumble play by playing with your child yourself

Rough play with your child gives you a chance to set some safety rules that will guide your child when he or she plays rough-and-tumble with others. Try this:

- First, make sure that when you are going to play rough you do it in a safe place. Before you start, ask your child, “Is this a safe place to play?” Then look for things your child might bump into, such as sharp corners or breakable objects.
- Agree on a word, such as “Stop,” that your child understands as meaning it is time to end play. Say, “When you say ‘stop,’ I will stop. When I say ‘stop,’ you will stop.” Then, wrestle and practice stopping.
- If your child stops playing roughly when you say ‘stop,’ make sure you offer a bit of praise. Say, “Thank you for stopping.” Then, explain why you wanted to stop.

Ask your child to ‘stop’ when he or she is getting out of control

Children can get very wound up when playing rough- and-tumble and may have a hard time stopping.

When you think this is happening, say, “Stop, we need to rest for a minute.” Take a short break. After your child seems settled, start to play again.

Remind your child about safety when he or she is playing

Young children need to be reminded of the rules of play. If your child and a friend are playing roughly, you might stop them to ask if they think they are playing in a dangerous place or not.

Then, you might remind them to say “stop” to each other when one of them is getting hurt or needs to rest.

