

Temper tantrums

"Not only has he learned to walk and talk, but now he's learned to stamp his foot, argue, scream until he's bright red and embarrass me in public on a regular basis. What's happened to my baby?."

- 1 in 5 two-year-olds has a tantrum at least twice a day
- The "Terrible Twos" are a normal part of your child's development
- Getting angry is a natural reaction but it just makes the situation worse
- Be firm but find a positive way to deal with the problem
- Plan to avoid the causes of tantrums
- Remember, they won't last forever!

When every day is a difficult day

Why temper tantrums happen

Tantrums may start around 18 months, are common around two years old and become much less common at four. Very young children are often not able to express themselves as much as they want to and their frustration may come out as a tantrum.

Tantrums are especially likely to happen if a child is tired, hungry or uncomfortable. Tantrums also often happen in busy, public places, which can be highly embarrassing and add to the parents' stress.

If you are worried about your child's behaviour discuss your concerns with your Health Visitor or GP.

Dealing with temper tantrums

- Keep calm. Getting angry and shouting at your child will only make things worse.
- Your child might be tired or hungry so rest or food might help. Or they might just need some attention or comfort.
- Try to find a distraction. Finding something else interesting to do or look at can help. If you're in a busy or noisy place try to go somewhere quieter.
- If none of the above works, try to see things from your child's point of view and understand what they actually want. Try offering them a choice, as this gives your child a sense of control and can be more effective than simply saying "no". Always try to offer a positive way out.
- If you do say "no" don't be tempted to give in later to calm them down. If you give in your child will learn that tantrums work!
- If you're at home you can try ignoring the tantrum, perhaps walking away into another room if it's safe to do so. Encourage your child to cool down on their own and talk more calmly about what they want.
- After the tantrum, praise your child for settling down. Even though they may no longer be angry they may still be upset, so give them a cuddle and make it clear that you still love them no matter what.

WARNING SIGNS

It could happen anywhere, but watch out for a tired or hungry child in any situation when he or she wants something that you have said "No" to, especially when out shopping, or during a social event or a day out.

ACTION

Keep calm, consider whether your child needs food or rest. Give your child attention and if possible, find a quiet place or some way of distracting his or her attention. Don't give-in, but do try to understand your child's feelings.

WHAT TO SAY

Try to offer your child a choice or a positive way out. Be calm and understanding. Keep it simple and clear. Praise your child for calming down afterwards.

PREVENTION

Avoid long shopping trips or tiring days out. It often helps to give your child extra attention and affection. Try to foresee possible causes for tantrums in the day ahead and find ways to avoid them.

CONTACTS

- Health visitor or GP
- School/nursery/playgroup
- Parentline Plus
0800 800 2222

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Avoiding temper tantrums

You can reduce the likelihood of a tantrum by planning ahead.

- Try to avoid your child becoming hungry or overtired.
- Make sure your child is getting enough personal attention and affection.
- Make sure your time together is quality time together especially if you work for most of the day.
- Keep shopping trips and outings as short as possible.
- Try to plan a regular method that you'll use to deal with tantrums when they do happen.

Remember, temper tantrums are normal and do not usually lead to serious problems. As your child gets older they will learn to deal more calmly with the stresses of everyday life.