

Temper Tantrums - Tips for Parents and Caregivers

What are temper tantrums?

Tantrums result from an overload of strong feelings that a child cannot control or express with words. They are seen most often in children 1-4 years of age. Most tantrums are harmless.

Children having a temper tantrum may:

- cry
- scream
- kick their feet and pound their fists
- throw themselves on the floor
- hold their breath
- clench their teeth
- bang their heads
- bite and hit other people

Why do children have tantrums?

Tantrums are likely to happen when a child is:

- tired or rushed
- anxious or moody
- sick
- hungry or thirsty
- frustrated or angry
- looking for attention

How can you prevent a tantrum?

- satisfy your child's need for attention by listening to them and praising good behaviour
- offer healthy snacks between meals (these are an important part of a young child's nutrition)
- make sure your child has the rest she needs by setting regular bedtimes and nap times
- avoid situations that cause frustration for your child; try not to say "no" too often
- give your child the words to express his/her feelings - "you sound angry"

What can you do if your child has a tantrum?

- stay calm and speak quietly
- refrain from getting angry, shouting, or spanking
- find the reason for the tantrum
- soothe your child with a hug
- make sure he/she does not hurt him/herself or anyone else
- if the child is being aggressive, remove him from the situation and take him to a quiet place

Parents should be concerned and seek help from their doctor if the child:

- still has tantrums beyond the age of five
- hold his/her breath and faints or has a seizure during a temper tantrum
- develops headaches or stomach aches
- displays extreme anxiety or aggression
- regresses in toilet training
- has frequent nightmares