

Temper Tantrums

Every parent has had those maddening moments when a toddler suddenly screams, kicks, or drops to the floor. Usually a tantrum is an expression of frustration or disappointment when a child is too young to put feelings into words. As children grow they can be taught other appropriate ways to handle their feelings.

Prevention:

Though you can never prevent all problems, you can reduce the likelihood of tantrums.

- Talk to your child about changes or special events.
- Explain your expectations when going out.
- Give warnings ahead of time before changing activities (going to bed or coming inside).
- Be sensitive to your child's feelings.
- Be sure your child gets enough rest and exercise.

During a temper tantrum:

- Stay calm!
- Try not to show any expression or strong response to the situation. If you are at home, turn away, or leave the room for a few moments (if your child is not hurting him/herself or others). Stay within earshot.
- Use words to express your child's feelings and suggest a self-calming routine. Example: "I know you're really angry that _____. Maybe you would like to hold your favorite bear for a while until you feel calm again."
- Use time out if necessary. This separation from the activity should be brief - about one minute per year of your child's age.
- If necessary, physically hold/restrain your child to prevent injury saying something like: "I know you're angry, but I will not let you hurt yourself or others."
- If the tantrum occurs in a public place, pick up your child and carry him/her to a private area or to the car. Make it clear you will not go back until he/she is calm.

Remember: Never give in to a tantrum!