

## Tantrums

One of the most challenging aspects of parenting a toddler may be dealing with temper tantrums. Believe it or not, your little one does not melt down just to frustrate you. Children actually dislike having tantrums as much as moms dislike coping with a child having them, according to Jay Hoecker, M.D., a pediatrician at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. Dr. Hoecker reminds parents that two-year-olds have a very limited vocabulary, which you may not often understand -- and when the child feels that you do not understand him or are not complying with his wishes, he may have a tantrum.

### ***Top 3 Causes of Toddler Tantrums, Courtesy of the Mayo Clinic***

1. Physical frustrations such as hunger or thirst that the child is experiencing at the moment
2. Frustrations from mental difficulties a child might face performing or understanding a specific task
3. Frustrations due to emotional challenges a child may face at that particular time

Temper tantrums are a normal part of childhood, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. A child should stop this behavior by the time he is close to five years old. The AAP recommends talking to your pediatrician if your child's tantrums become worse after age four, or if the child is hurting others or himself during tantrums.

### ***What Moms Can Do about Tantrums***

Parenting expert and psychotherapist Jill Spivack weighs in with tips for how parents can cope with a child's temper tantrums:

Make sure you're calm before you deal with a tantrum. Breathe deeply if you need to ... it's better to wait a moment before you decide what to do.

If your child is safe, allow her to let her emotions out. Don't try to intervene, calm her down, talk to her, or redirect her when she is in the middle of a tantrum. A child needs some time to move through it, and when calm, that's when you can talk/hug, etc. Talking during a tantrum fuels the fire of the tantrum and makes it worse.

While the child is throwing the tantrum, sit nearby and just observe calmly ... don't talk ... don't pay special attention to it.

After it's over, give your child a hug and empathize with his difficult feelings.

Tantrums are very normal for young children, but here are ways you can try to prevent them as best you can:

- Avoid hunger, overstimulation, and fatigue ... they only make tantrums much worse!
- Bring snacks with you on the go.
- Make sure your child naps and sleeps well at night.
- Plan only one activity per day if your child is prone to becoming overstimulated.

The American Academy of Pediatrics says parents should never punish children for having temper tantrums. Doing so could be unhealthy for a child, because he may start to keep his anger and frustration inside.

Don't reward your child for having a tantrum either, says the AAP. You don't want to teach him that tantrums are an acceptable way to get what he wants.

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