

Dealing with 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 expectation 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

What to do 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 ____."
Perhaps 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!