

# Toddler Tantrums and How to Deal with Them

Tantrums are uncontrolled bursts of anger and frustration in toddlers or preschoolers. A toddler may start kicking, biting, hitting, screaming, and throwing objects and may not listen for a short time.

It is a normal part of growing since the child feels frustrated at not being able to express feelings appropriately. It is a child's way of dealing with difficult-to-express emotions. Tantrums are most common between the ages of 1-3, when the child's social and emotional skills have just started to develop.

Not all children are similar. Thus, some of them are more prone to express themselves in this way. How often tantrums occur depends on:

- The temperament of the child, as some children get upset more easily.
- Hunger, stress, tiredness, or excitement, as some children find it difficult to express these feelings.
- Difficulty coping with a situation, like a toy being taken away by an older child.
- Intense emotions of shame or anger overwhelming a child.

Caregivers must try to reduce stress, remove the irritants from the environment, and try to distract the child. Whatever you do, though, sometimes tantrums happen, and below are some of the tips to handle them.

## Dealing with tantrums

- Do not punish a child who has a tantrum. Just stay calm and understand that it is part of the emotional growth of the child. But at the same time, control or limit the child's reaction by holding them, so that the child knows that there is a limit.
- If it happens in a public place, take your child a little bit away and calm your child by talking to them, as it is embarrassing for a caregiver and toddler to handle the situation in public.
- Help your child to find the right kind of words, instead of hitting or screaming. Thus, tell your child that good children never do that. Instead, they speak out and say, "mommy I am hungry" or "mommy I am tired."
- Debrief your child after some time—chat to the child about what happened and teach them about the appropriate way of reacting.

To reduce the number of tantrums:

- Give more attention to your child, either by playing with them or reading books together. Do that on a regular basis. It also helps to improve the emotional understanding of each other.
- Hug your child more often, as that may help a child to overcome these awkward moments.
- Maintain a schedule for most essential tasks, be it playing or sleeping.
- Give your child a reasonable choice, like whether to buy a football or another toy.

- Provide a harmonious environment for a child. Children often copy the behavior of elders; thus, you should make sure that everyone behaves appropriately at home.
- Encourage your child to use certain words and phrases for expressing themselves.
- Make a special corner for your child that is stuffed with books, toys, and other goodies. Whenever a child becomes aggressive, encourage him or her to go to that corner, but do not use it as punishment would spoil the whole purpose of the exercise.
- Teach your child to reach out for help, so that whenever the child feels like getting aggressive, they will instead speak their needs, saying “mommy I need a hug” or “mommy I need help.”

*About the author:*

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Dr. Preet is a family physician. He has been practicing medicine for the last 15 years and often sees children with various health and behavioral difficulties. He understands that tantrums could be quite embarrassing and a challenging problem for parents to handle. He is also a passionate writer.

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