

## TIP SHEET: Temper Tantrums

Ages Affected: 1 ½–3 years old

The first time your toddler throws a tantrum can be surprising and embarrassing but you are not alone. Every parent can expect to deal with some temper tantrums in children from ages 1 ½–3. The trick is to deal with them as soon as they start. Temper tantrums are equally common in boys and girls. More than half of young children will have one or more per week.

The triggers for temper tantrums:

There are predictable situations that can be expected to trigger temper tantrums, such as bedtime, suppertime, getting up, getting dressed, bath time, watching TV, a parent talking on the phone, visitors at the house, family visiting another house, car rides, public places, family activities involving siblings, interactions with peers, and playtime.

All young children from time-to-time will whine, complain, resist, cling, argue, hit, shout, run, and defy their parents. Temper tantrums, although normal, can become upsetting to parents because they are embarrassing, challenging, and difficult to manage.

**Here are a few tips to help deal with your upset child:**

- Remain calm and do not argue. Before you take care of the child, you must control your own behavior. Spanking or yelling will make the tantrum worse.
- Think before you act. Count to 10 and then think about the source of the child's frustration and the best way to stop the tantrum.
- Try to intervene before your child is out of control. Get down at her eye level and say, "You are starting to get very angry, calm down."
- Reward children for positive attention not negative attention. During situations when they are prone to temper tantrums, catch them when they are being good and say such things as, "Nice job sharing with your friend."
- Do not ask children to do something when they must do what you say. For example, do not ask, "Would you like to eat now?" Instead, say, "It's suppertime now."
- Give your child control over little things by giving choices. This will make her feel like she has power over certain situations. "Which do you want to do first, brush your teeth or put on your pajamas?"
- Removing your child from the place where the tantrum started. Say, "Let's go for a walk."
- Teach children how to make a request without a temper tantrum and then give them what they ask for. Say, "Try asking for that toy nicely and I'll get it for you."
- Make sure that children are well rested and fed in situations where a temper tantrum can start. Say, "Dinner is almost ready, here's a cracker for now."
- Avoid boredom. Say, "You have been working for a long time. Let's do something fun."
- Create a safe environment that children can explore without getting into trouble. Childproof your home or classroom so children can explore safely.
- Increase your tolerance level. Are you available to meet the child's reasonable needs? Evaluate how many times you say, "No." Avoid fighting over minor things.
- Let children know ahead of time when an activity is almost done. Say, "When the timer goes off five minutes from now it will be time to put your dolls away and go to bed."
- Make your child laugh to distract her attention and surprise the child out of the tantrum.