

Strategies for coping with temper tantrums

1 Preventing Temper Tantrums

- Give your child lots of positive attention for being cooperative and for expressing their emotions.
 - Be aware of your child's temperament. Children are born with their own temperament. This can affect your child's reactions to the world around them.
 - It is important to notice what is usually happening before your child has a tantrum. By being aware of this, you may avoid some tantrums. For example, being tired, hungry or upset.
 - Notice and label your child's emotions using words, signs, gestures, facial expressions and pictures. Start with happy, sad, mad, scared. For example, *I can see you're mad right now.* This is important because:
 - ♦ It gives your child a word or gesture to identify their strong feelings.
 - ♦ It teaches them empathy.
 - ♦ It shows them you understand how they feel.
 - Give your child lots of positive attention for expressing their emotions appropriately.
 - Label and comment on your own emotions and the emotions of others during the day.
 - Model calm and controlled behavior when you are upset. Set a good example.
- Consider the importance of the issue. Sometimes you can let the little things go.
 - Give your child some control throughout the day by providing appropriate choices throughout the day. For example, *It's time to dress; do you want your red shirt or blue shirt?*
 - Redirect or distract your child with an object, song, game or task.
 - Prepare your child for changes in activity by allowing them to participate if they are interested.
 - Let your child know that the activity is going to change. For example, *In five minutes we are going to go for a walk.*
 - Make sure your child's daily routine is followed as closely as possible.
 - Set your child up for success. For example, do not go grocery shopping close to naptime.
 - Keep your words positive by saying the words *No* and *Don't* less often.
 - Make sure your child is rested and fed before going out. Take snacks, drinks and toys with you.
 - Match your expectations to what your child can and cannot do. Limit the length and type of outings and activities to match your child's ability.

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2 Strategies if your child has a temper tantrum

- Stay calm. For example, take deep breaths and think clearly. You will need to have enough self-control for both of you.
- Never yell, hit, or use any type of physical punishment.
- An angry reaction to a tantrum can make the situation worse by frightening the child and sending a message that force is okay.
- Try to understand your child's point of view.
- Find out why they are having the tantrum. For example, are they hungry, tired, hurt, sick, frustrated?
- Do not copy or make fun of your child's emotions. Do not embarrass your child
- Make sure your child and others are safe.
- If it is early enough in the tantrum, try to redirect their attention with an object, song or game.
- Once your child is in a tantrum, stay close by until the tantrum is over. Don't try to stop your child or reason with your child when they are out of control. Save your energy for later.

- If your child is having a tantrum because they want something, try not to give in during the tantrum. If you decide to give in, do so when your child has calmed down.
- After a tantrum, your child may need to be held and reassured, as they may be tired and scared of their lack of control or strong reaction.
- After the tantrum is over, let it go.
- Try to be as consistent as possible when dealing with your child's tantrums.

Remember

- Temper tantrums are a normal stage of development.
- Tantrums can range from crying to screaming, kicking, hitting and breath holding.
- It is okay for kids to be angry.
- A parent's job is to teach the child how to express their feelings and needs appropriately.
- You are not alone.

Further Reading

<http://www.capitalhealth.ca/nr/default.asp>

<http://www.investinkids.ca>

