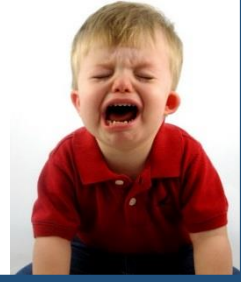


Temper Tantrums

Meltdown, Hissy Fit, Acting Out



From birth onwards, babies and young children develop and change in amazing ways.

In a few short years they learn language skills, become aware of themselves and the needs of others, start making friends, begin to gain a sense of self control and patience, and learn kindness. They are also becoming increasingly independent and aware of the changing world around them. It can be a challenging time.

What are temper tantrums?

Temper tantrums are:

- an expression of a young child's frustration with the challenges of the moment
- a sudden unplanned display of anger or emotions
- a range of behaviours which can range from whining and crying to screaming, kicking, biting, hitting, or breath holding
- equally common in boys and girls and are most common in children ages of 1 to 3
- episodes that usually last 30 seconds to 2 minutes and are most intense at the start
- lessening in frequency by age 4-5, when children learn healthy ways to handle strong emotions

Why is my child having a temper tantrum?

Your child may:

- be having trouble figuring something out, or completing a specific task
- not have the language skills to express their feelings
- be upset with a changing environment
- be frustrated with what is happening around them
- be tired, hungry, or feel unwell

A temper tantrum is a normal way that young children show their frustration. They do not "throw a tantrum" out of spite, or to embarrass you.

Avoid temper tantrums before they start:

- Offer limited and realistic choices that you can live with.
- Keep off-limits objects out of sight and out of reach.
- Distract your child by switching from one activity or environment to another.
- When your child wants something, consider the request carefully. Is it an outrageous request? Maybe it is not such a bad idea. Choose your battles; accommodate when you can.
- Know your child's limits. If you know your toddler is tired, it may not be the best time to take them grocery shopping or try to squeeze in one more errand.
- Help your child to learn new things. This means helping them to do a simple thing that they have not done before, then giving them praise so they feel proud of what they can do before moving on to tackle something more difficult.

Tantrum Tactics

- Ignore the behavior
- Remain calm. Your job is to help your child calm down
- Walk away, but stay where the child can see you, especially if your child is very young
- Continue what you were doing. You can observe without focusing all of your attention on your child
- Keep your child from getting hurt, harming others or breaking things
- Be firm and consistent about what you expect
- Do not give in to your child's demands

After the Storm

- Praise your child for calming down
- Acknowledge their feelings
- Comfort your child without giving into the demands of the tantrum
- Never punish or make fun of a child having a temper tantrum. Do not use words like "bad girl" or "bad boy" to describe your child
- Teach your child other ways to handle anger and frustration
- Be a good role model

When to talk with a Health Care Professional?

- You often feel angry or out of control when you respond to tantrums.
- You keep giving in.
- The tantrums cause a lot of bad feelings between you and your child.
- You have questions about what you're doing or what your child is doing.
- Your child is older than 4 and still has temper tantrums often.
- Your child often hurts self or others.
- Your child seems very disagreeable, argues a lot, and hardly ever cooperates.



For more information or assistance:



You can speak with:

- Your Community Health Nurse
- Your Physician/Nurse Practitioner



Or Visit:

- EasternHealth.ca/YourHealthAtoZ

or call the HealthLine:

- 811 / TTY 1-888-709-3555

