

# Dealing with Tantrums 37

Factsheet for parents and teachers

*It is important for adults to understand that between the ages of one and four years, most children have tantrums.*

*All toddlers want to do things for themselves. They want to dress themselves, feed themselves, pour their own juice and generally be more independent. They can get very upset if they find that they can't do what they are trying to do or if their parent/carer stops them. This upset can lead to a tantrum.*

## How can I cope with tantrums?

Your child's screams and yells can be alarming. You may feel angry and will almost certainly be embarrassed in front of other people. But remember, children learning to deal with their emotions is a normal part of growing up.

<http://www.trippin.co.nz>

## During the tantrum

### **Don't panic**

The main thing to do is to stay calm and not to get upset yourself. Just remind yourself that this is normal, that lots of parents have to deal with it, and that you will too.

### **Try to distract them**

If you are in a situation where you know a tantrum is likely, you may be able to avoid one by distracting your child; e.g. point out the big red sports car in the road, laugh at the funny picture in the shop display or give them their favourite toy to play with.

### **Remember what you are trying to do**

You are trying to teach your child that rules are important and that you will stick to them.

### **Ignore the tantrum**

You should calmly continue with whatever you are doing – chatting to someone else, packing your shopping or whatever. Every so often check to make sure your child is safe. Ignoring your child is very hard, but if you answer back, or even smack them, you are giving them the attention they are demanding.

### **Pay attention to any good behaviour**

As soon as you see any signs of calming down, e.g. they stop screaming, praise them. Turn your full attention back to the child, talk to them with warmth and admiration. If you reward the new behaviour like this, your child is more likely to stay calm and carry on being good.

## Where can I get help?

It is often very helpful to talk to other parents or friends. If this doesn't help and if the tantrums are getting you down, it may be worth having a chat with a public health nurse, plunket nurse or general practitioner. They will be able to give advice or suggest more specialist help.

## Tips for avoiding tantrums

Tantrums often happen in predictable situations. Children find it hard to wait. Make it easier for them by:

- ⌘ taking their favourite books and toys to the doctor's surgery
- ⌘ storing their favourite biscuits out of sight, rather than where they can see them
- ⌘ sticking to your rules.

Your child may be particularly difficult at certain times of the day – perhaps when they are tired or hungry. Simple arrangements may help. They could:

- ⌘ have an afternoon nap, instead of staying awake all day
- ⌘ have a snack after kindergarten at 3.30 p.m., instead of having to wait until 5.00 p.m. for tea.



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