Temper tantrums are a common part of a child’s development. Tantrums are most common between two and four years of age. They can be as short as 20 seconds or go on for hours.

During a tantrum, a child may:

- run around screaming and yelling
- bang her head
- pound his fists
- kick and bite
- cry
- roll around on the floor
- hold her breath (don’t worry if this happens, children will naturally breathe when they need to)
What causes temper tantrums?

Tantrums are your child’s way of showing anger and frustration. Temper tantrums often happen when your child...

- is not able to do something he wants to do
- is asked to do something she does not want to do
- needs to get rid of anger and tension
- is over-tired, excited or hungry
- is unable to manage a difficult task
- does not know the words to say
- has learned that from past experience a tantrum may be rewarded
- wants your attention

When going out:

Make your outings interesting for your child and involve her in the activity.

- Don’t go out when your child is tired.
- Bring a snack.
- Talk to your child while you shop and run errands.
- Let your child participate in what you are doing.
How do I prevent tantrums?

- Help your child to recognize his emotions and understand how he is feeling.
- Learn your child’s patterns and know what situations may start tantrums.
- Be involved and pay attention to your child’s needs. Follow and encourage your child as she explores.
- Provide opportunities for your child to play with toys “right for his age.”
- Put away things that you don’t want your child to touch.
- Have only necessary and realistic rules that keep your child safe. Remember that children may know the rules today but may forget them tomorrow.
- Keep to your child’s routine for meals and sleep times.
- Let your child know what to expect throughout the day.
- Teach your child how to release her feelings by using words and telling you how she feels, or by using energy in a productive way.
- Don’t give a child a choice when there is no choice. For example, say, “It’s bedtime” instead of “Do you want to go to bed now?”
- Do not have tantrums of your own.
- Watch and praise your child when he behaves in a way that you want him to continue.
What do I do if my child has a temper tantrum?

- Ignore the tantrum.
- Stay calm – don’t try to argue or “talk sense” to your child.
- Don’t give in to your child.
- Keep your child from getting hurt, harming others or breaking things.
- As soon as your child is quiet or behaving well, praise him.

For older toddlers:

- Stop what you are doing and move close to your child.
- Calmly tell your child what to stop doing and what to do instead.

If the tantrum doesn’t stop:

- Move your child into a time-out and explain why.
- Take your child away from the situation and to an uninteresting but safe space.
- Tell your child she must be quiet for one minute.
- Take your child out of time-out once he has been quiet for one minute.

After a tantrum:

- Stay calm and loving.
- Remove what was causing the tantrum.
- Give your child something quiet and easy to do.
- Praise your child for behaving well.