

*“Not only has she learnt to walk and talk, but now she’s learnt to stamp her foot, argue, scream until she’s bright red and embarrass me in public on a regular basis. What’s happened to my baby?”*

## **When every day is a difficult day**

Why temper tantrums happen: Tantrums may start around 18 months, are common at two years and become less common at four. Very young children are often not able to express themselves as much as they want to and their frustration can come out as a tantrum. Tantrums are especially likely to happen if a child is tired, hungry or uncomfortable.

Tantrums also often happen in busy, public places, which can be highly embarrassing and add to the parent’s stress. If you are worried about your child’s behaviour, discuss your concerns with your Health Visitor or GP.



## Dealing with temper tantrums:

- Keep calm. Getting angry and shouting at your child will only make things worse.
- Your child might be tired or hungry, so rest or food might help. Or they may just need some attention or comfort.
- Try to find a distraction. Finding something else interesting to do or look at can help. If you are in a busy or noisy place, try to find somewhere quieter.
- If none of the above work, try to see things from your child’s point of view and understand what they actually want. Try offering them a choice, as this gives them a sense of control and can be more effective than simply saying “no”. Always try and offer a positive way out.
- If you do say “no” don’t be tempted to give in later to calm them down. If you give in, your child will learn that tantrums work!
- If you are at home you can try ignoring the tantrum, perhaps walking away if it is safe to do so. Encourage your child to cool down on their own and talk more calmly about what they want.
- After the tantrum, praise your child for settling down. Even though they may no longer be angry, they may still be upset, so give them a cuddle and make it clear that you still love them, no matter what.

## Avoiding temper tantrums:

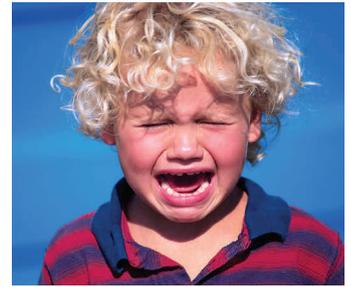
You can reduce the likelihood of a tantrum by planning ahead -

- Try to avoid your child becoming hungry or overtired.
- Make sure your child is getting enough attention and affection.
- Make sure your time together is quality time, especially if you work for most of the day.
- Keep shopping trips and outings as short as possible.
- Try to plan a regular method that you’ll use to deal with tantrums when they do happen.



Remember, temper tantrums are normal and do not usually lead to serious problems. As your child gets older, they will learn to deal more calmly with the stresses of everyday life.

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 **Warning Signs:**  
It could happen anywhere, but watch out for a tired or hungry child in any situation when he or she wants something that you have said “no” to, especially when out shopping or during a social event or day out.

 **Action:**  
Stay calm, consider whether your child needs food or a rest. Give your child attention and if possible, find a quiet place or some way of distracting their attention. Don’t give in, but do try to understand your child’s feelings.

 **What to say:**  
Try to offer your child a choice or a positive way out.  
Be calm and understanding.  
Keep it simple and clear.  
Praise your child for calming down afterwards.

 **Prevention:**  
Avoid long shopping trips or tiring days out.  
It often helps to give your child extra attention and affection.  
Try to foresee possible causes for tantrums in the day ahead and find ways to avoid them.

### Contacts:

**Talk to your health visitor or GP:** Name:..... Number:.....

**Family Lives:** 0808 800 2222 [www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk)