



# temper tantrums



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Tresillian 24 hr Parents Help Line  
**(02) 9787 0855**  
or 1800 637 357  
(Freecall outside the Sydney Metropolitan area)  
[www.tresillian.net](http://www.tresillian.net)

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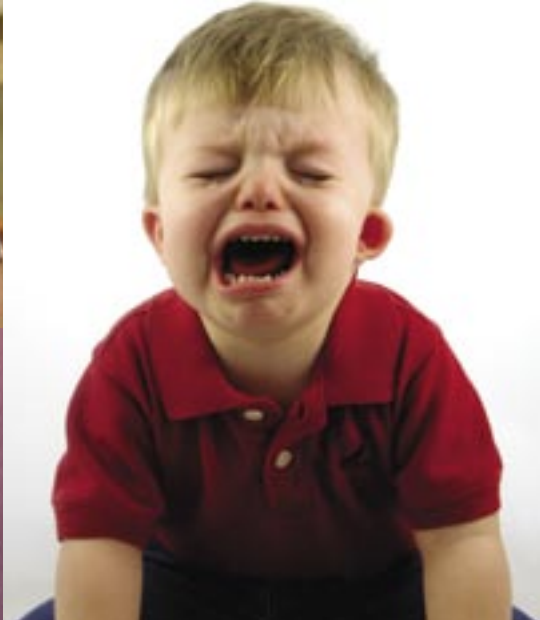
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Temper tantrums and negativity are a common behaviour during the toddler period as they learn to control their world. Nevertheless, these behaviours can be exhausting and frustrating for parents.

### Reasons for Temper Tantrums

- Difficulty telling parents and others what they need – not enough words to talk about their needs or emotions
- Frustration that they do not have the skill to do tasks others are doing
- Tiredness and hunger
- Difficulty controlling their emotions – quickly go from excitement to anger
- Fear – become scared when they lose control and do not know how to calm down
- Do not like to wait for things – as they can only think of their own needs
- Habit – the toddler has learnt that if they have a tantrum they will get what they want
- Testing limits – this is helping them learn about control and power
- Temperament of your toddler – some toddlers are easy going, others are shy or very active
- It is important to seek assistance if you are concerned about the number or intensity of the temper tantrums – occasionally temper tantrums can be due to more serious problems



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### Things that make the situation worse

- Being tired (both you and your toddler)
- Being hungry
- Being too excited or overstimulated
- Being bored or under-stimulated
- Being unwell
- Being told *no* or *don't* all the time
- Being in a hurry

### Avoiding Temper Tantrums

#### Whenever possible:

- have realistic expectations of your toddler's ability and needs
- anticipate and avoid (if possible) difficult situations or activities for your toddler when they are tired, hungry or unwell
- introduce new activities slowly and one at a time
- develop routines and rituals so your toddler has a feeling of control over their world
- limit the amount of activity and noise – have quiet times during the day
- use a distraction when your toddler is becoming upset or agitated e.g. look at that car what colour is it?
- provide your toddler with limited choices e.g. do you want milk or water
- always ask your toddler to do things using one command at a time, wait for the action to be completed before giving the next task e.g. come here ..... sit down ..... let me help you put your shoes on ....
- use positive language and praise – avoid saying 'no' all the time
- understand any stress your toddler may be experiencing e.g. the arrival of a new baby, being left in childcare etc

### During a Temper Tantrum

There are several strategies that can be used to help your toddler gain control of their emotions:

1. *Holding and rocking* your toddler while you provide soothing words e.g. daddy is here you are safe. This method can assist your toddler calm down and feel safe. It may be safer for you to hold them on your lap facing outwards if they are kicking.
2. *Pretend to ignore*, this can be difficult. You will need to ensure that your toddler won't hurt themselves during the tantrum e.g. take out of the bath, take out of shopping trolley or remove furniture. It is important that you stay calm, take some deep breaths and count to ten.
3. *Time out* or putting your toddler in a safe place. If you are at home you can use time out for both you and your toddler to assist you gain control.
4. *Removing them from the situation* this can be difficult as you will need to stop what you are doing and take your toddler to another area e.g. move from one room to another.

### Things that don't help

- Getting upset and yelling at your toddler – most parents feel guilty when they have lost control
- Giving lengthy reasons about why you wanted your toddler to do something or why you are upset – keep explanations simple
- Bribing your toddler to behave e.g. if you stop yelling I will give you a chocolate
- Physical punishments – shouting, slapping, name-calling or threats

The good news for parents is that as your toddler develops language and physical skills the number and severity of tantrums will reduce.

**REMEMBER EACH CHILD IS AN INDIVIDUAL AND DEVELOPS AT THEIR OWN PACE.**

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