

Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca. You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

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How to navigate your toddler's tantrums

Toddlers may throw fits, act selfishly, and refuse to listen when they're asked to do something. Often they are frustrated because they aren't yet able to communicate and be as independent as they want to be. The result? Meltdowns.

You can try the following strategies to help manage your toddler's challenging behaviour:

- Be patient and set firm, fair, and consistent boundaries. This will help your toddler learn what behaviour is appropriate.
- Minimize conflicts as much as possible. For example, put things your toddler shouldn't touch out of reach. Try to prepare your toddler in advance for circumstances they may not like, such as, "We are going to put away the toys soon."
- Choose your battles. Focus on the most important, such as making sure car seats are used and bedtimes followed. If not, your home will become a battleground.
- Set limits but have realistic expectations.
- Use a firm voice, look your child in the eye, and sometimes physically remove them from a situation. But realize that your child's behaviour, no matter how troublesome, has a purpose. Your toddler is simply trying to make sense of the world.
- Offer limited choices. For example, instead of asking, "What do you want for lunch, simplify. Try giving them just a couple of choices, perhaps sandwich or soup. This gives your toddler a sense of independence.
- When you see a dispute or tantrum coming, distract or redirect your toddler to prevent a meltdown.
- Compliment your child when they behave well. Approval helps your child learn proper behaviour and reinforces a positive sense of self.
- Provide opportunities for your toddler to interact with others. When these interactions are positive, children learn that they have behaved in acceptable ways. They become more self-confident.
- Although you may sometimes feel exhausted, remember to reassure toddlers that you love them and it's their behaviour you don't like, not them. Offer plenty of praise and attention when your child behaves well.

- Model the behavior that you want to see. Interact with others in a loving, open manner. Deal with frustrations calmly. Children learn from what they see others doing around them.