

Baby Tantrums

By Elizabeth Pantley, Author of Gentle Baby Care

Learn about it

A baby's first tantrum can take you by surprise. Your baby can really shock you by shrieking, stamping, hitting, or making his whole body go stiff. But don't take it personally; baby tantrums aren't about anything you've done wrong, and they aren't really about *temper*, either – your baby isn't old enough for that. The ways you'll respond to your baby's behavior when he is older are different than how you should respond now.

Why babies have tantrums and what you can do about it

A baby tantrum is an abrupt and sudden loss of emotional control. Various factors bring tantrums on, and if you can identify the trigger, then you can help him calm down — and perhaps even avoid the tantrum in the first place. Here are the common reasons and ways to solve the problem:

Reason for tantrum	Possible solution
Overtiredness	Settle baby down to sleep; Provide quiet activity
Hunger	Give baby a snack or something to drink
Frustration	Help baby achieve his goal or remove the frustration; Use distraction
Fear/anxiety	Hold and cuddle baby; Remove baby from difficult situation
Inability to communicate	Try to figure out what he wants; Calmly encourage him to show you
Resisting change	Allow a few minutes for baby to make adjustment
Over stimulation	Move baby to a quiet place

How to prevent baby tantrums

Often, you can prevent a baby from losing control of his emotions if you prevent the situations that lead up to this. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- When baby is tired, put him down for a nap or to sleep.
- Feed your baby frequently. Babies have small tummies and need regular nourishment.
- Give your baby toys that are geared to his age and ability level.
- Warn your baby before changing activities (“One more swing, then we’re going home”).

- Be patient when putting your baby in an unfamiliar environment or when introducing him to new people.
- Help your baby learn new skills (such as climbing stairs or working puzzles).
- Keep your expectations realistic; don't expect more than your baby is capable of.
- As much as possible, keep a regular and predictable schedule.
- When your baby is overly emotional, keep yourself as calm as possible.
- Use a soothing tone of voice and gentle touch to help your baby calm down. He can't do it on his own, he needs your help.

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