



# American Academy of Pediatrics



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## Water Safety

Drownings rank behind only motor-vehicle accidents as the leading cause of death among youngsters in middle childhood. Most often, these tragedies occur when children swim without adequate adult supervision. In most cases, these children (and their parents) have overestimated their swimming ability and their knowledge of water-survival skills.

Here are some guidelines to keep your middle-years child safe in and near the water:

- Make sure your youngster (older than age 4) learns how to swim from an experienced and qualified instructor. Check for available lessons at local recreation centers, YMCAs and summer camps.
- Never allow your child to swim alone or play by or in water away from the watchful eye of an adult. Ideally, this adult should be trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Also, teach your child to use the buddy system even when swimming with large groups of friends.
- Do not allow your child to engage in horseplay that might result in injury.
- Prohibit your child from diving unless someone has already determined the depth of the water and checked for underwater hazards.
- Do not allow your child to swim in areas where there are boats or fishermen. Nor should he/she swim at beaches where there are large waves, a powerful undertow or no lifeguards. Make sure he/she understands that swimming in one body of water (e.g., a backyard pool) may be different from swimming in a river or ocean.
- Do not permit your child to rely on an air mattress, inner tube or inflatable toy as a life preserver. If these devices deflate, or your child slips off them, he/she could be in serious trouble.
- If your pool has a cover, remove it completely before swimming. Also, never allow your child to walk on the pool cover; water may have accumulated on it, making it as dangerous as the pool itself. Your child also could fall through it and become trapped underneath.
- Keep a safety ring with a rope beside the pool at all times. If possible, have a phone in the pool area with emergency numbers clearly marked.
- Spas and hot tubs are dangerous for young children who can easily drown or become overheated in them. Don't allow young children to use these facilities.
- Your child should always wear a life preserver when he/she swims or rides in a boat. A life preserver fits properly if you can't lift it off over your child's head after he's been fastened into it. For the child younger than age 5, particularly the non-swimmer, it also should have a flotation collar to keep the head upright and the face out of the water.
- Your child should never be permitted to swim during a lightning storm.
- If you have a backyard swimming pool, it should be enclosed with high and locked fences on all four sides, especially the side that separates the house from the pool.
- When your youngster is old enough - usually by his/her high school years - he/she should learn life-saving skills such as CPR, taught in most cities through community agencies or the American Red Cross.

Younger children are often drawn to water as well. For these children, water can be especially hazardous. To ensure your child's safety, keep the rules above in mind and also take note of these additional tips for younger children.

- Be aware of small bodies of water your child might encounter, such as fishponds, ditches, fountains, rain barrels, watering cans and even the bucket you use when you wash the car. Children are drawn to places and things like these and need constant supervision to be sure they don't fall in.
- Children, who are swimming, even in a shallow toddler's pool, should be watched by an adult, preferably one who knows CPR. Inflatable pools should be emptied and put away after each play session.

Although swimming classes for young children are widely available, the American Academy of Pediatrics does not recommend them for children younger than age 4 for two reasons:

1. You may be lulled into being less cautious because you think your child can swim.
2. Young children who are repeatedly immersed in water may swallow so much of it that they develop water intoxication. This can result in convulsions, shock and even death.

If you do enroll a child younger than 4 years old in a swimming program, particularly a "Daddy-" or "Mommy-and-me" class, think of it primarily as an opportunity to enjoy playing in the water together. Be sure the class you choose adheres to guidelines established by the national YMCA. Among other things, these guidelines forbid submersion of young children and encourage parents to participate in all activities. When your child reaches 4 years of age, you may want to teach him/her to swim so he'll/she'll feel more comfortable in and around water. But remember that even a child who knows how to swim needs to be watched constantly.



### **Temper Tantrums and Childhood**

Strong emotions are hard for a young child to hold inside. When children feel frustrated, angry or disappointed, they often express themselves by crying, screaming or stomping up and down. As a parent, you may feel angry, helpless or embarrassed. Temper tantrums are a normal part of your child's development as he/she learns self-control. In fact, almost all children have tantrums between the ages of 1 and 3. You've heard them called "the terrible twos." The good news is that by age 4, temper tantrums usually stop.

Your young child is busy learning many things about his/her world. He/she is eager to take control. He/ she wants to be independent and may try to do more than his/her skills will allow. He/she wants to make his/her own choices and often may not cope well with not getting his/her way. He/she is even less able to cope when he/she is tired, hungry, frustrated or frightened. Controlling his/her temper may be one of the most difficult lessons to learn.

Temper tantrums are a way for your child to let off steam when she is upset. Following are some reasons your child may have a temper tantrum:

- Your child may not fully understand what you are saying or asking, and may get confused.
- Your child may become upset when others cannot understand what he/she is saying.
- Your child may not have the words to describe his/her feelings and needs. After 3 years of age, most children can express their feelings, so temper tantrums taper off. Children who are not able to express their feelings very well with words are more likely to continue to have tantrums.
- Your child has not yet learned to solve problems on his/her own and gets discouraged easily.
- Your child may have an illness or other physical problem that keeps him/her from expressing how he/she feels.
- Your child may be hungry, but may not recognize it.
- Your child may be tired or not getting enough sleep.
- Your child may be anxious or uncomfortable.
- Your child may be reacting to stress or changes at home.
- Your child may be jealous of a friend or sibling. Children often want what other children have or the attention they receive.
- Your child may not yet be able to do the things he/she can imagine, such as walking or running, climbing down stairs or from furniture, drawing things or making toys work.

### **Preventing temper tantrums**

You should not be surprised if your child has tantrums only in front of you. This is one way of testing your rules and limits. Many children will not act out their feelings around others and are more cautious with strangers. Children feel safer showing their feelings to the people they trust.

Knowing this, you will still not be able to prevent all tantrums, but the following suggestions may help reduce the chances of a tantrum:

**Encourage your child to use words** to tell you how he/she is feeling, such as "I'm really mad." Try to understand how he/she is feeling and suggest words he/she can use to describe his/her feelings.

**Set reasonable limits** and don't expect your child to be perfect. Give simple reasons for the rules you set, and don't change the rules.

**Keep a daily routine** as much as possible, so your child knows what to expect.

**Avoid situations that will frustrate your child**, such as playing with children or toys that are too advanced for your child's abilities.

**Avoid long outings or visits** where your child has to sit still or cannot play for long periods of time. If you have to take a trip, bring along your child's favorite book or toy to entertain him/her.

**Be prepared with healthy snacks when your child gets hungry.**

**Make sure your child is well rested**, especially before a busy day or stressful activity.

**Distract your child** from activities likely to lead to a tantrum. Suggest different activities. If possible, being silly, playful or making a joke can help ease a tense situation. Sometimes, something as simple as changing locations can prevent a tantrum. For example, if you are indoors, try taking your child outside to distract his/her attention.

**Be choosy about saying "no."** When you say no to every demand or request your child makes, it will frustrate him/her. Listen carefully to requests. When a request is not too unreasonable or inconvenient, consider saying yes. When your child's safety is involved, do not change your decision because of a tantrum.

**Let your child choose whenever possible.** For example, if your child resists a bath, make it clear that he/she will be taking a bath, but offer a simple decision he/she can make on his/her own. Instead of saying, "Do you want to take a bath?" Try saying, "It's time for your bath. Would you like to walk upstairs or do you want me carry you?"

**Set a good example.** Avoid arguing or yelling in front of your child.

### **Managing temper tantrums**

As a parent, you can sometimes tell when tantrums are coming. Your child may seem moody, cranky or difficult. He/she may start to whine and whimper. It may seem as if nothing will make him/her happy. Finally, he/she may start to cry, kick, scream, fall to the ground or hold his/her breath. Other times, a tantrum may come on suddenly for no obvious reason. When your child has a temper tantrum, the suggestions below can help you both get through it successfully:

1. Distract your child by calling his/her attention to something else, such as a new activity, book or toy. Sometimes just touching or stroking a child will calm him/her. You may need to gently restrain or hold your child. Interrupt his behavior with a light comment like, "Did you see what the kitty is doing?" or "I think I heard the doorbell." Humor or something as simple as a funny face can also help.
2. Try to remain calm. If you shout or become angry, it is likely to make things worse. Remember, the more attention you give this behavior, the more likely it is to happen again.

3. Minor displays of anger such as crying, screaming, or kicking can usually be ignored. Stand nearby or hold your child without talking until he calms down. This shows your support. If you cannot stay calm, leave the room.
4. Some temper tantrums cannot be ignored. The following behaviors should not be ignored and are *not* acceptable:
  - Hitting or kicking parents or others
  - Throwing things in a dangerous way
  - Prolonged screaming or yelling

Use a cooling-off period or a "time-out" to remove your child from the source of his anger. Take your child away from the situation and hold him/her or give him/her some time alone to calm down and regain control. For children old enough to understand, a good rule of thumb for a time-out is 1 minute of time for every year of your child's age. (For example, a 4-year old would get a 4-minute time-out.) But even 15 seconds will work. If you cannot stay calm, leave the room. Wait a minute or two, or until his crying stops, before returning. Then help him/her get interested in something else. If your child is old enough, talk about what happened and discuss other ways to deal with it next time.

You should never punish your child for temper tantrums. He/she may start to keep his/her anger or frustration inside, which can be unhealthy. Your response to tantrums should be calm and understanding. As your child grows, he/she will learn to deal with his strong emotions. Remember, it is normal for children to test their parents' rules and limits.

As tempting as it can be, do not reward your child for stopping a tantrum. Rewards may teach your child that a temper tantrum will help her get his/her way. When tantrums do not accomplish anything for your child, they are less likely to continue.

You may also feel guilty about saying "no" to your child at times. But be consistent and avoid sending mixed signals. When parents don't clearly enforce certain rules, it is harder for children to understand which rules are firm and which ones are not. Be sure you are having some fun each day with your child. Think carefully about the rules you set and don't set too many. Discuss with those who care for your child which rules are really needed and be firm about them. Respond the same way every time your child breaks the rules.

Your child should have fewer temper tantrums by the middle of his fourth year. Between tantrums, his behavior should seem normal and healthy. Like every child, yours will grow and learn at his own pace. It may take time for him to learn how to control his temper. When the outbursts are severe or happen too often, they may be an early sign of emotional problems. Talk to your pediatrician if your child causes harm to himself or others during tantrums, holds his breath and faints, or if the tantrums get worse after age 4. Your pediatrician will make sure there are no serious physical or psychological problems causing the tantrums. He or she can also give you advice to help you deal with these outbursts.

It is important to realize that temper tantrums are a normal part of growing up. Tantrums are not easy to deal with, and they can be a little scary for you and your child. Using a loving, understanding and consistent approach will help your child through this part of his development.



### **Toddler's Diet Understanding your toddler's diet**

You'll probably notice a sharp drop in your toddler's appetite after his first birthday. Suddenly he's/she's picky about what he/she eats, turns his/her head away after just a few bites, or resists coming to the table at mealtimes. It may seem as if he/she should be eating more now that he's /she's so active, but there's a good reason for the change. His/her growth rate has slowed, and he/she really doesn't require as much food now.

Your toddler needs about 1,000 calories a day to meet his/her needs for growth, energy and good nutrition. If you've ever been on a 1,000-calorie diet, you know it's not a lot of food. But your child will do just fine with it, divided among three small meals and two snacks a day. Don't count on his/her always eating it that way, because the eating habits of toddlers are erratic and unpredictable from one day to the next. He/she may eat everything in sight at breakfast but almost nothing else for the rest of the day, or he/she may eat only his/her favorite food for three days in a row, then reject it entirely.

Your toddler needs foods from the same four basic nutrition groups that you do:

1. Meat, fish, poultry, eggs
2. Dairy products
3. Fruits and vegetables
4. Cereal grains, potatoes, rice, breads, pasta

When planning your child's menu, remember that cholesterol and other fats are very important for his/her normal growth and development, so they should not be restricted during this period.

By his/her first birthday, your child should be able to handle most of the foods you serve the rest of the family but with a few precautions. Be sure the food is cool enough so that it won't burn his/her mouth. Test the temperature yourself, because he'll/she'll dig in without considering the heat. Try to avoid foods that are heavily spiced, salted, buttered, or sweetened. These additions prevent your child from experiencing the natural taste of foods, and they may be harmful to his/her long-term good health. Young children seem to be more sensitive than adults to these flavorings, and may reject heavily spiced foods.

Your little one can still choke on chunks of food that are hard and large enough to plug his/her airway, so make sure anything you given him/her is mashed or cut into small, easily chewable pieces. Never offer him/her peanuts, grapes, carrots, whole or large sections of hot dogs, meat sticks, or hard candies. Hot dogs and carrots in particular should be quartered lengthwise and then sliced into small pieces. Also, make sure your toddler eats only while seated and supervised by an adult. "Eating on the run" increases his risk of choking. By his/her first birthday or soon thereafter, your toddler should drink his liquids from a cup. He'll/she'll need less milk now, because he'll/she'll get most of his calories from solid foods.

To get a better understanding of what an average day's meals should look like, take a look at the sample menu below:

## Sample One Day Menu

This menu is planned for a one-year-old child who weighs approximately 21 pounds.

1 tablespoon = 1/2 ounce (15 cc)  
1 teaspoon = 1/3 tablespoon (5 cc)  
1 cup = 8 ounces (240 cc)

### BREAKFAST

1/2 cup iron-fortified breakfast cereal or 1 cooked egg (not more than 3 eggs per week)  
1/4 cup whole milk (with cereal)  
1/2 cup juice  
Add to cereal one of the following:  
1/2 banana, sliced  
2-3 large sliced strawberries

### SNACK

1 slice toast or whole wheat muffin  
1-2 tablespoons cream cheese or peanut butter (spread)  
1 cup whole milk

### LUNCH

1/2 sandwich-tuna, egg salad, peanut butter, or cold cuts  
1/2 cup cooked green vegetables  
1/2 cup juice

### SNACK

1-2 ounces cubed cheese, or 2-3 tablespoons pitted and diced dates  
1 cup whole milk

### DINNER

2-3 ounces cooked meat, ground or diced  
1/2 cup cooked yellow or orange vegetables  
1/2 cup pasta, rice, or potato  
1/2 cup whole milk

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## Discipline Methods

There are times when your child will test your limits and rules. At these times, how you respond is as important as the ground rules you've established. When your child does misbehave, try the following techniques. Not only will they encourage your child to cooperate now, but they will teach him or her how to behave in the future as well.

### Natural Consequences

When a child sees the natural consequences of his/ her actions, he/ she experiences the direct results of her choices. (But be sure the consequences do not place her in any danger.) For example, if your child spills her milk on purpose, he/she will not have milk to drink. If she throws and breaks her toy, she will not be able to play with it. It will not be long before your child learns not to spill her milk and to play carefully with her toys.

When you use this method, resist the urge to lecture your child or to rescue him (by getting more milk, for example). Your child will learn best when he/she learns for himself/herself and will not blame you for the consequences he/she receives.

### Logical Consequences

Natural consequences work best, but they are not always appropriate. For example, if your child does not pick up his/her toys, they may be in the way, but chances are he/she will not care as much as you do. In this situation, you will need to step in; creating a consequence that is closely connected to his/ her actions. You might tell him/her that if he/she does not pick up her toys, then you will put them away — but he/she will not play with them again for a whole day.

When you use this method, it is important that you mean what you say and that you are prepared to follow through *immediately*. Let your child know that you are serious. You do not have to yell and scream to do this. You can say it in a calm, matter-of-fact way.

### Withholding Privileges

In the heat of the moment, you will not always be able to think of a logical consequence. That is when you may want to tell your child that, if he/she does not cooperate, he/she will have to give something up he/she likes. The following are a few things to keep in mind when you use this technique:

- Never take away something your child truly needs, such as a meal.
- Choose something that your child really likes.
- Be sure you can follow through on your promise.

### Time-Out

Time-outs should be your last resort and you should use it only when other responses do not work. Time-outs work well when the behavior you are trying to punish is clearly defined and you know when it occurred. Time-outs can be helpful if you need a break in the action (for example, if

your child is hitting a sibling or friend). You can use a time-out with a child as young as one year old. Follow these steps to make a time-out work:

1. Choose a time-out spot. This should be a boring place with no distraction, such as a chair. (Bathrooms can be dangerous and bedrooms may become playgrounds). Decide what two or three behaviors will be punished with time-out and explain this to your child.
2. When your child does something he/she knows will result in a time-out, you may warn him once (unless it is aggression). If it happens again, send him/her to his time-out spot *immediately*. Tell him what he did wrong in as few words as possible. A rule of thumb is one minute of time-out for every year of your child's age. (For example, a 4-year-old would get a 4-minute time-out.) But even 15-seconds will work. If your child will not go to the spot on his own, pick him up and carry him there. If he will not stay, stand behind him and hold him gently but firmly by the shoulders or restrain him in your lap and say, "I am holding you here because you have to have a time-out." Do not discuss it any further. It should only take a couple of weeks before he learns to cooperate.
3. Once your child is capable of sitting quietly, set a timer so that she will know when the time-out is over. If fussing starts again, restart the timer. Wait until your child stops protesting before you set the timer.
4. When the time is up, help your child return to a positive activity. Your child has "served his/her time." Hug him/her and welcome him/her back. If you need to discuss his/her behavior, wait several minutes before doing so.

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## Keys to Effective Discipline

You will have days when it seems impossible to get your child to behave. But there are ways to ease frustration and avoid unnecessary conflict with your child.

- **Be aware of your child's abilities and limitations.** Children develop at different rates and have different strengths and weaknesses. When your child misbehaves, it may be that he simply cannot do what you are asking of him.
- **Think before you speak.** Once you make a rule or promise, you will need to stick to it. Be sure you are being realistic.
- **Remember that children do what "works."** If your child throws a temper tantrum in the grocery store and you bribe him or her to stop by giving candy, your child will probably throw another tantrum the next time you go. Make an effort to avoid reinforcing the wrong kinds of behavior, even with just your attention.
- **Work toward consistency.** No one is consistent all of the time. But try to make sure that your goals, rules and approaches to discipline stay the same from day to day. Children find frequent changes confusing and may resort to testing limits just to find out what their limits are.
- **Pay attention to your child's feelings.** If you can figure out why your child is misbehaving, you are one step closer to solving the problem. Often it helps to let your child know that you understand. For example, "I know you are feeling sad that your friend is leaving, but you still have to pick up your toys."
- **Learn to see mistakes — including your own — as opportunities to learn.** If you do not handle a situation well the first time, don't despair. Figure out what you could have done differently, and do it the next time. If you feel you have made a real mistake in the heat of the moment, wait to cool down, apologize to your child, and explain how you will handle the situation in the future.

## Tips To Avoid Trouble

The first thing to remember is to avoid power struggles whenever possible. Instead, address only those issues that truly are important to you. The following tips may help:

- **Offer choices whenever possible.** By giving choices, you can set limits and still allow your child some independence. For example, try saying, "Would you like to pick up your toys yourself, or should I help you?"
- **Make a game out of good behavior.** Your child is more likely to do what you want if you make it fun. For example you might say, "Let's have a race and see who can put his coat on first."
- **Plan ahead.** If you know that certain circumstances always cause trouble, such as a trip to the store, discuss with your child ahead of time what behavior is acceptable and what the consequences will be if he or she does not obey. Try to plan the shopping trip for a time when your child is well rested and well fed, and take along a book or small toy to amuse your child if he or she gets bored.

- **Praise good behavior.** Whenever your child remembers to follow the rules, offer encouragement and praise about how well he or she did. You do not need any elaborate system of rewards. You can simply say, "Thank you for coming right away," and hug your child.

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