

# 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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