

Tips for the “Terrific” Twos

By *Glena Davies, M.D.*
Pediatrics

Living with a two-year-old can offer some of the most delightful and challenging months of your early parenting years. Dubbed the “Terrific Twos,” this time is very important in your child’s younger years. Glena Davies, M.D., a pediatrician with Falls Medical Group, offers the following tips on handling your child’s toddler years and turning them into the “Terrific Twos.”



Glenna Davies, M.D.

The toddler years are a time when children test the limits of their environments, including the rules set by their parents. During this stage of development, parents need to begin setting rules and employing discipline techniques:

- Concentrate on two or three rules initially, giving highest priority to safety issues like not running into the street.
- Express each misbehavior as a clear and concrete rule such as “Don’t push your brother.” Also state the acceptable and appropriate behavior such as “Walk, don’t run.”
- Ignore unimportant or irrelevant behavior such as swinging legs, poor table manners, whining or sulking.
- Use rules that are fair and attainable. A child should not be punished for behavior that is part of normal development such as thumb-sucking or potty training accidents.
- Distract your child from misbehavior by attracting him or her to something else. This is very effective when in someone else’s house or in a store.
- Mild disapproval, including eye contact, a stern look and a brief “stop” or “no” is usually all that is required to stop a young child’s misbehavior.
- Use temporary time-outs lasting about one minute per year of age of the child, but no longer than five minutes.
- Be reasonable with your expectations -- a 2 year old cannot be expected to sit through a

2 hour lecture/meeting without ultimately “losing it”.

- Always carry along a toy/book/object that is familiar to your child - this can be used to distract a child from an unwelcome activity.
- Finally, be sure to apply the rules and discipline measures consistently.

Temper tantrums are one of the most common concerns among parents of toddlers. By following a few guidelines, these tantrums can be handled

effectively and their frequency decreased over time.

- Understand the source of the tantrum and label the emotion if possible.
- Prevention: anticipate and distract; if you recognize that a certain event will throw your child into a tantrum, try to shift his or her attention to something else.
- Ignore attention-seeking or demanding-type tantrums that are thrown by a child to get his or her way.
- Contain - manually guide or hug your child, if necessary, until he or she relaxes, usually within one to three minutes.

Handling temper tantrums in public requires some additional tactics:

- Be sure your child is well rested and fed before outings since tantrums increase with fatigue and hunger.
- Try role playing at home for such outings as eating in a restaurant or going to church.
- Ignore inappropriate behavior, but stop unacceptable behavior such as hitting or yelling immediately.
- Praise good behavior.

To help decrease the duration and frequency of your child’s tantrums, begin by being a good role model. *(Continued)*

Tips for the “Terrific” Twos continued...

Stay calm without screaming or having an adult tantrum. Learn to anticipate when your child is going to have a tantrum such as when you see your child getting tired or frustrated. Try to transition your child to another activity. For bedtime tantrums, let your child know it will soon be bedtime approximately five minutes in advance to help them prepare for the transition. Finally, be consistent with how you handle your child's tantrums.

For more information call Advanced HealthLine at (262) 512-2880 or toll-free at 1-888-709-2080 outside the Milwaukee metro area, or log on at www.ah.com

Glena O. Davies, M.D., is a Pediatrician with Advanced Healthcare's Mayfair Clinic (3289 North Mayfair Road, Wauwatosa, 414) 771-7900).

Dr. Davies and her colleagues at Advanced Healthcare are leading physicians in Pediatric care. Her Pediatrics colleagues include:

Kathleen Burchby, M.D.

Roopa Bhupathi, M.D.

Thomas Chatton, M.D.

Jill Czajkowski, M.D.

Alan Deangelis, M.D.

Carl Eisenberg, M.D.

George Frommell, M.D.

John Goetz, M.D.

Howard Gollup, M.D.

Karen Jacobson, M.D.

Tina Joannides, M.D.

Paula Keppeler, M.D.

Deborah Kim, M.D.

Barbara Kolp-Jurss, M.D.

Shennell Miller, M.D.

Andrea Munoz, M.D.

Kevin Scammell, M.D.

Douglas Smith, M.D.

Matthew Solberg, M.D.

Mary Jo Zimmer, M.D.