

Fuss Management: Planning Ahead to Prevent Tantrums



There's no sure cure for young children's public temper tantrums. But some simple steps can reduce the chances that your toddler or preschooler will "pitch a fit" when you run errands together.

Go on "practice" outings and errands with your child.

- Have pretend outings at home to help your child know what you expect of her. Play "riding the bus," "getting groceries," "having a check-up."
- Go on short, simple outings as practice for longer trips. Introduce basic ideas: "Look, don't touch." "Stay next to me." "Notice what's around us." Such practice trips can be especially helpful to very active or impulsive children.
- Remind your child, "I'm helping you learn how to run errands."

Plan errands and other outings with your child's needs in mind.

- Sometimes a child should not go with you. Let him stay with a trusted caregiver, if you can, when he is ill, his meals or naps will be disrupted, or he is likely to feel overwhelmed at the place you are going to.
- Pack wisely. You may need
 - healthy snacks and drinks
 - comfort items—a blanket, books, or small toys (avoid items that easily get away, such as balls)
 - a list of songs your child enjoys
 - learning activity kits (see the Tip Sheets in the "Things to Do While You're Waiting" series for ideas)
 - a change of clothes in case of spills or accidents
- Tell your child what to expect. Be brief but clear: "We have two things to do—get groceries and mail the bills. We'll be home for lunch." "After your eye exam, I'll take you to child care."
- Let your child make choices: "Will you ride in the cart, or walk by me?" "Do you want to sing a song or hear the radio?" "What do you want to see first—seals or elephants?"

Prepare yourself.

- Be ready to divide your time between "taking care of business" and interacting with your children. A few minutes of positive attention can go a long way.
- Some experts suggest that parents not reward children for good behavior on outings because they believe that having a pleasant time is its own reward and that rewards can lead to frustration. Decide your "reward policy" and be ready to stick to it!
- Ask the pediatrician about motion sickness if your child often complains of stomach upset, headache, or unusual tiredness when traveling.

For related Web resources, see "Fuss Management: Planning Ahead to Prevent Tantrums" at <http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tips.htm>.



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