

## Help Toddlers Stop Whining

At some time, all children whine. It usually starts at about age two. It is very annoying to parents. Luckily, parents can help their child stop whining.

Knowing why your child whines is the first step. Reasons include they:

- Lack skills to express their needs and emotions;
- Are easily frustrated; and
- Become overwhelmed and are unable to cope.

Toddlers also whine when they need their parents' attention. They may be tired, hungry, scared, sick, or anxious.

For some children, whining becomes a habit. They whine when they want something. In order to get their toddler to stop whining, parents give in to their toddlers' demands. Children quickly learn that whining is successful. Giving in to the demands makes the whining behavior worse.

What should a parent do when a toddler whines?

- Figure out why your child is whining. Ask, "Are you tired?" "Are you sick?" Listen to what she wants or needs. Make eye contact. Show her you are listening.
- Distract your child. Toddlers are easily distracted. Give him a toy. Find an activity he likes.
- Help your child use words to express how she feels. "You are upset because your sister is playing with the teddy bear."



- Spend some time alone with your child every day. Children need one-on-one attentions with their parents. Read a story together. Play. Take a walk.
- Teach your child how to ask for help in a polite voice. He may not know he is whining. Show him how to talk in a normal voice so people can understand.
- Respond immediately when your child asks for something. If you cannot get what she wants right away, let her know you will help her as soon as possible.
- Use praise when your child asks without whining.
- Respond to your child's whining the same every time he whines. If you give in to his demands sometimes, he will learn that if he whines enough, he will get what he wants.
- Be united in how you respond to your child's whining. Children quickly learn which parent gives in to whining behavior.
- Avoid stressing your toddler. For example, do not expect good behavior at a family dinner that is 2 hours past her usual dinner hour. Do not take her shopping when she usually takes a nap.
- Set up ground rules when your child is not upset. Explain that she will *never* get what she wants if she whines. If she asks calmly, you will consider getting her what she wants.
- Do not get angry if your child gets overwhelmed. Take her to a quiet place to calm down.

Keep your cool when your child whines. Your response will shape her behavior.

*Brought to you by Parent Help Line and St. John's Children's Hospital*



Call the Parent Help Line. Help is just a phone call away.  
1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week  
[www.parenthelpline.org](http://www.parenthelpline.org)

