



Infants, Children And Adolescents

Diplomates of
American Board
of Pediatrics

Medical Group

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DISCIPLINE FOR TODDLERS

Time out involves you placing your child in their playpen for a short period of time following each occurrence of a negative behavior. This procedure has been effective in reducing the frequency of such behaviors as tantrums, hitting or other aggressive behaviors, failure to follow directions, and jumping on furniture. It is most appropriate for young children who are not yet verbal, ages 9 months to 2 years.

A. Preparations:

1. A place for time out should be selected. This could be your child's playpen. Wherever you choose, it needs to be a place where not much is happening without making the child afraid.
2. You should discuss with your spouse which behaviors results in a time out.

B. Procedure:

Step 1: Following the negative behavior, say to the child, "No, don't _____" Say this calmly; no screaming, talking angrily, or nagging. Carry the child to the playpen facing away from you and do not talk to them.

Step 2: When the child is in the playpen, wait until they have stopped crying for about 10 to 15 seconds before removing them from the playpen without saying a word and placing them near some toys. Until then do not look at or talk to or about them. Once the time out is complete do not reprimand them or mention what they did wrong.

Step 3: After each time out episode, children should start out with a "clean slate." No discussion, nagging, threatening or reminding is necessary. At the first opportunity, look for and praise positive behaviors.

C. Summary of the Rules

- Decide which behaviors require time out ahead of time and discuss this with your spouse.
- Don't leave your child in time out and forget about them.
- Don't nag, scold or talk to the child when they are in time out. (All family members should follow this rule.)
- Remain calm, particularly when your child is being testy.

**Adapted from Dr. Edward Christopherson, "Incorporating Behavioral Pediatrics into Primary Care," Pediatric clinics of North America, April 1982.