

Young Children with Challenging Behavior

When Should Parents Be Concerned?

Age	Normal Behavior	Behavior of Concern	Suggestions on Behavior of Concern
<p>Infancy Birth to 1 year</p>	<p>Cries in response to frustration, hunger or fatigue</p> <p>Has regular sleep habits, sleeps soundly</p> <p>Recognizes familiar faces, may be scared by strangers</p> <p>Tracks movement with eyes by 2 to 3 months</p> <p>Snuggles and relaxes when held</p> <p>Smiles responsively by 2 to 3 months</p>	<p>Excessive crying that continues even when needs are met</p> <p>Not sleeping, restless sleeper</p> <p>Shows random affection with familiar faces. May show irrational fear without cause</p> <p>Does not track movement with eyes by 2 to 3 months</p> <p>Muscles become rigid when held. Doesn't want to be held</p> <p>Seldom smiles</p>	<p>Make sure all basic needs are met. Babies should not be disciplined; they are too little to know right from wrong</p> <p>Try calling another parent or relative about your concern</p> <p>If you are still concerned, call a medical hot line, your insurance hot line, or a pediatric nurse supervisor</p> <p>Call your pediatrician right away to schedule an appointment</p>
<p>Toddler 1 to 3 years</p>	<p>Constant exploration, walking, running, climbing</p> <p>Can be left with minimal anxiety</p> <p>Interested in toilet training by 18 months to 2 years, but may not be successful</p> <p>Uses the word "no"</p> <p>Responds with curiosity to stimulus, comfortable with touch and noise</p> <p>May hit and bite, but can be redirected and stopped</p>	<p>Fearful of exploration</p> <p>Severe separation anxiety</p> <p>Attempts to toilet train are difficult and creates excessive anxiety and behaviors</p> <p>Consistently screams instead of using language</p> <p>Easily overwhelmed by stimulus, overreacts to touch, noise</p> <p>Severe temper tantrums that cannot be redirected or stopped</p>	<p>Make sure all basic needs are met</p> <p>Try to redirect behavior</p> <p>Be consistent and set time limits for behavioral incidents</p> <p>Keep track of frequency and intensity of behaviors to see if there is a pattern</p> <p>If you are still concerned, call a medical hot line, your insurance hot line, or a pediatric nurse supervisor</p> <p>Call your pediatrician to schedule an appointment</p>

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Early Childhood 3 to 5 years	<p>More engaged in positive interaction with peers</p> <p>Imaginary companions</p> <p>Likes one-on-one attention from caregivers, but can share attention as well</p> <p>Curious; asks “why” questions</p> <p>Has fears; shows off and uses bad language to get attention</p> <p>Aggressive behavior to family members or peers that can be redirected</p> <p>Is actively exploring environment, but can take direction in safety</p>	<p>Has difficulty playing or taking turns with peers</p> <p>Seems unusually cruel to animals</p> <p>Responds aggressively to shared attention</p> <p>Belligerent behavior in response to change in schedule or unexpected or unknown situation</p> <p>Excessive fears; uses bad language to get control</p> <p>Intentionally harmful behavior to self or others</p> <p>Excessively hyperactive; does not respond to or remember safety instructions</p> <p>Exhibits dangerous behavior, starts fires</p>	<p>Continue to reinforce appropriate behavior</p> <p>Develop a way of rewarding appropriate behavior and consistently implement it for several weeks to see if the behavior of concern is changing</p> <p>Reassure your child that you love him or her despite the challenging behaviors</p> <p>Call your school district or the principal of your local school to ask for the telephone number of the early childhood coordinator. This person will give you suggestions for responding to the behaviors of concern.</p> <p>Call your pediatrician to schedule an appointment.</p> <p>Your pediatrician may encourage you to schedule an evaluation with a child psychologist</p>

Resources:

- Health Education Consultants: “What is Normal Difficult Behavior” and “What is Unacceptable Behavior?”*
- National Mental Health Organization Web Site: “Erik Erickson’s Eight Stages of Human Development”*
- Parent Child Abuse Hawaii, Hawaii Chapter, National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse: “Developmental Stages of Children”*



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