

TIP SHEET: Whining

Ages Affected: 1 ½–5 years old

Whining is an irritating blend of talking and crying. Often it is very frustrating to have to listen to, but it's important to learn how to deal with it in a calm manner.

Why do children whine?

Whining is often the only way children can express themselves when they're tired, cranky, hungry, uncomfortable, or just don't want to do something. Although the language skills of 3-and-4-year-olds are rapidly improving, they still don't have the vocabulary to describe all of these feelings.

Try not to give in or react. By not reacting, you are teaching your child that there are better ways of communicating.

Here are some tips to help control your anger and help deal with your whining child:

- Refuse to let it bother you. Calmly tell your child that you can't understand what she wants when she whines and that you'll listen when she talks in a nicer voice.
- Ignore the whining and definitely do not overreact. It's really easy to lose your cool after several minutes of whining. Turn away when a child whines. Respond as soon as the whining stops. Stay calm and don't look or act irritated. Leave the room, sing or do something to keep yourself distracted from the whining.
- Teach your child what a "nice voice" sounds like. Show your child the difference between an annoying, whiny tone and a normal one. Ask the child to "talk nice" and do not give in until he does. Don't make fun of your child's tone of voice, but show him the difference and then practice together.
- Don't give in and give your child what she wants



while whining. Instruct other caregivers and family members to behave in the same manner. If you give in after any period of time, your child will learn where your breaking point is and whine longer next time.

- Make the answer an automatic "no" when whining is involved. This way your child will learn whining doesn't get your child her way.
- Give praise. You might say, "Thanks for using your normal voice," or "My ears love that voice." This works wonders. Whenever your child asks for something politely, acknowledge it and thank him.
- Decide if his request is reasonable. Even if he says it in a nice voice, you can't always say yes. Sometimes you need to say no, but always explain why to your child. Learning to accept no is an important part of growing up.
- Hang in there. Change isn't going to happen overnight. Continue to be patient with your child and, over time, he will learn that whining is not the way to communicate with you.
- Always set a good example: speak nicely to others and to your child.