

Whining and Pestering

Definition

- Whining is a verbal temper tantrum. Compared to screaming tantrums, it's a step up the developmental ladder. Some examples of whining behavior are:
- A child who won't take No for an answer. He keeps repeating his demand for something you've told him he can't have or do.
- A younger child demands "one more" snack, book, game or back ride.
- An older child nags a parent to buy things, even though his bedroom already looks like a toy store.
- If the tone of voice is normal, we may call it pestering or badgering the parent.

Health Information

Causes

- The whiny child often has a strong-willed temperament. He is persistent and doesn't give up. He thinks he can wear you down.
- The parent may off and on reward whiny behavior by giving in to it.
- Most normal 3 and 4-year-olds enjoy testing the limits in their home.
- Expect more whining when your child is tired or sleepy.

What to Expect

- If whining doesn't get rewarded, it should improve in 2 to 4 weeks.

Care Advice

1. **Teach Your Child that Whining and Pestering Don't Work:**
 - Teach that you don't change your mind, you know what you're doing and that "no means no".
 - While children's needs (love, food, clothing, safety) should always be met, their wants (for more of everything) require a reality check. Children need to learn to accept limits when they request nonessential possessions or activities. They need to learn to cope with the normal frustrations of unmet wants.
 - By doing this now, you are preventing them from becoming a complaining adult.
2. **Clarify the Rule: "No Whining in our House".**
3. **Be Kind and Understanding About Their Request:**
 - "I know you want to stay up later, but it's past bedtime". "I know you want more snacks, but we need to save room for dinner".
 - Give your decision and reason in a calm, quiet, loving voice.
4. **Keep the Discussion of Your Reasoning Brief:**
 - Highly educated parents tend to talk and reason too much with their children.
 - Before age 5, trying to reason with your child just gives him hope that if he perseveres, you will give in. After you give your reason, you can say "No means no, I'm done talking about it".
 - For school age children, listen to their request. But, after a few minutes you can say: "I've heard your side of it, but we don't pay to see the same movie twice at the theater. Now, let me get back to my work".

5. Redirect Your Child to Other Activities:

- Help your child disengage from their nagging behavior.
- Point them in a new direction.
- Suggest playing with LEGOs, reading a book, going outside, doing a puzzle or calling a friend.

6. Ignore Ongoing Pestering:

- If the whining continues, don't expect to satisfy or calm your child.
- Don't play point-counterpoint with them. Stop talking. Let him have the last word.
- Often you will need to move to another room.

7. If Whining Continues, Give a Brief Time-Out:

- As a last resort, send your child to their bedroom. This is your backup plan. Calling it a Quiet Time is often better than calling it a Time Out. Reason: Your goal is to help your child control his emotions and calm himself down. Tell him, "Come back when you feel better".
- Another backup plan is to say: "Stop or you will losefor the rest of today". It can be video access or a favorite toy.
- All children do some whining and complaining. They need a wise parent to coach them through this annoying phase. Be sure to praise them when they accept your decision without resorting to repeated pestering.

Call Your Doctor If

- Your child has many other behavior problems
- Whining becomes more frequent
- Whining is not better after using this plan for 4 weeks
- You have other questions or concerns

Pediatric Care Advice

Author: Barton Schmitt MD, FAAP

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