

What To Do if Your Child Becomes Angry?

From [HealthyChildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org)

When you're making changes in your family's lifestyle that may involve everything from what you put on the dining room table to how often you allow the TV set to be turned on, don't be surprised if your preschooler and siblings are annoyed (or worse) at times.

If you're going to help your youngster manage her weight, you can expect some groaning and complaining and even some outbursts of anger. Whenever you make changes like whether there are fewer trips to fast-food restaurants or more physical activities for the entire family, there will probably be some grumbling. If you're not careful, you might be tempted to give in to this anger by letting your child have a doughnut or turning the TV back on. But that approach will undermine your other efforts to get her weight under control.

To reduce the likelihood that your child will react with anger, make sure that the changes you're making are applied to your entire family. If you serve your overweight child different foods than others at the dining room table, she'll feel singled out and isolated. If everyone is eating a healthy dish of fruit as a dessert, however, she's much more likely to accept it as the new way of doing things.

When angry outbursts do occur, it's good to already have a plan in place to deal with them effectively. Talk with the other adults in the home and agree in advance on how you all will respond to these temper tantrums about your family's lifestyle changes. Here are some suggestions.

- Stay calm. Don't react to your child's anger by becoming irritated yourself. That will only put you and your youngster on a collision course and escalate the difference of opinion rather than resolve it. A lot of parents take their children's outbursts personally and end up lashing out themselves, which is never helpful.
- Give your child a time-out. Perhaps have her sit in a chair for a few minutes and tell her, "When you can talk nicely, you can come back into the family room." Time-outs work if you're consistent and remain calm.
- Stay the course. Never lose sight of the fact that you're making these long-term changes for the health of your family, and explain that to your child. Say something like, "We all want to be healthy, and just like all of us buckle our seat belts to keep us safe in the car, we're going to eat a little differently, too, so we stay healthy." Don't give in to her insistence that she turn on the TV or play more video games, and don't make deals (avoid statements like, "OK, just this once I'll let you watch cartoons until dinnertime, but then you can't ask me to do it again tomorrow"). If you hold your ground, your child will realize that all of her complaining is a waste of energy, and these episodes are likely to decrease in frequency.
- If you decide to reward your child for good behavior and willingness to follow the new family rules, don't use food as that reward. Positive attention, praise, or a hug are often all the reward she needs. Perhaps give her a sticker or read an extra bedtime story.