

Frustrated toddler's hitting concerns parents but is likely behavioral

Yvette:

We are having major issues with my 2-1/2-year-old. He hits everyone, and it's to the point where we cannot take him around other children anymore. We have tried all the expert recommendations, including timeouts, trying to prevent him from doing it in the first place (such as when he is fighting over a toy), distractions, etc. We have explained that hitting hurts people and it's unacceptable, but he continues to do it. I know this is somewhat normal behavior at this age, but his hitting seems to be a bit extreme.

Laura

Laura:

As you know, your child's hitting stems from the frustration of not getting what he wants or his way. Is he overly stimulated when he is around a lot of other children? Does he become upset easily? Does he go to a preschool with older children? If so, you may want to make an unannounced visit to observe the social interaction of the children. Since you have tried timeouts

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(consistently over a period of time), removing the stimuli (the toy) and removing your son from the environment to resolve the behavior, I recommend consulting your son's pediatrician. While this behavior is not uncommon, the frequency of his hitting should be addressed.

Also, talk with your husband about the approach you both use to discipline your son. Make sure you and he are a consistent, united front. When your son engages in this behavior, remain calm and in control. Do not spank him for hitting. This message is too inconsistent for a 2-year-old to understand. The best advice I can give you is that this will pass. Until then, you and your pediatrician can work on

ways to minimize the behavior and rule out any potential medical concerns.

Yvette

Yvette:

We have a 4-1/2-year-old son who was potty trained. We had twins seven months ago, and three months ago we moved to a new house. Since moving, he has been having accidents every day, all day long. We have tried everything we can think of to encourage him to use the potty, but nothing seems to help. Do you have any suggestions?

Kolby

Kolby:

Are there usual times during the day when he has an accident? Sometimes,

children become so engrossed in play or an activity that they simply don't take the time to go to the bathroom. Check his fluid consumption. Is he drinking a lot of sugary drinks or soda? These drinks have a tendency to go right through children and can cause frequent bathroom use. If you try some adjustments and he's still having accidents, please consult your pediatrician. The problem is likely behavioral, but your physician will want to rule out any medical issues. In the interim, I suggest putting him on the potty after he eats and at designated times based on the frequency of his bathroom usage. By sitting him on the potty, you can do an anticipatory strike to avoid the accidents.

Yvette



Yvette McGee Brown is a former Domestic Relations/Juvenile Court Judge. She is currently the president of the Center for Child and Family Advocacy at Columbus Children's Hospital.