

Prevent Aggressive Behaviors in Toddlers

A child with aggressive behavior causes stress for the entire family.

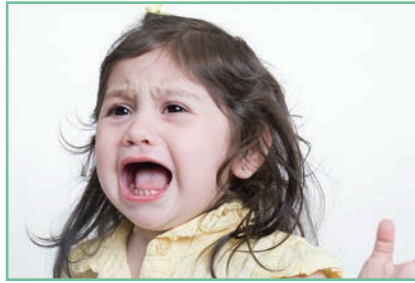
This child:

- Is at risk for school failure.
- Often develops other risky behaviors.
- Causes frustration and sadness for parents.
- Diverts attention away from better behaved siblings.

What causes a child to be aggressive? Opinions vary. Some say one cause is spanking.

Twenty years of research shows that regular spanking has long term harmful effects on children. They are at greater risk for anger, anxiety and depression. Some engage in domestic violence and abuse as adults. Many kids feel devalued. No studies prove spanking leads to positive results.


In the short term, spanking stops the bad behavior. At least, it seems to work most of the time. Parents spank in anger. The pain and shock causes the child to stop the behavior that the parent thinks is wrong. However, the child learns a new negative behavior. He learns to resolve problems with anger and hitting.



Doctors believe that education is the key. First, parents need to learn what a child is able to do at his age. This is called normal childhood development. Often, we fail to teach parents what a child can do at each stage. The result is parents punish their child for normal behavior.

Doctors tell parents to:

- Not spank their child.
- Learn about normal childhood behaviors.
- Teach good behavior. Show the child what to do and how to behave.
- Redirect bad behavior. Divert the child's attention.
- Praise and reward good behavior.

 For more information go to parenthelpline.org > school readiness.

Does Gun Play Cause Aggression?

Many parents avoid buying play guns and water guns. They fear it will lead to aggressive behavior. Yet, studies show that kids who engage in pretend gun play do not commit violent crimes as adults.

Play is play. Childhood games are imaginary. This sometimes includes gun play.

Through play, kids learn to:

- Cooperate.
- Be aware of how others think and feel.
- Wait and take turns.
- Think and plan.
- Resolve conflicts.

Pretend gun play, like other play, can result in conflict. As with all play, parents must keep a watchful eye. Let kids work out their own conflicts.

If needed, stop the play. Teach your kids a new social skill – good words and actions to get what they want. Redirect them to another activity.

*Brought to you by Parent Help Line at HSHS St. John's Children's Hospital
to help keep kids safe, healthy and happy.*



Call the Parent Help Line. Help is just a phone call away.

1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week

www.parenthelpline.org

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