

Patient Factsheet

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Behavioural Concerns in children

What is it?

Some children act differently to other children. Behaving differently isn't always a problem. But, if your child's conduct is causing stress, worry, harm, or risk – either to your child, or to those around your child – then there is a cause for concern. Examples of concerning actions are:

- Violence
- Aggression
- Being hyperactive
- Hurting themselves when having a tantrum
- Tantrums that happen often or are explosive

There are many reasons why children act in these ways. Sometimes, it's a normal part of development. In many cases, issues are only temporary.

What will my GP do now?

The first step is to work out what may be causing your child's behaviour. Your GP will also:

- Check and treat any underlying health issues – such as glue ear, eczema, constipation, low iron
- Talk about referrals – for assessment and support
- Give you strategies to help manage the behaviour – so you can support your child in between appointments

Your GP may ask to speak with your child alone. Sometimes, children feel more comfortable to open up about their struggles if their parents aren't in the room. Speaking alone can be helpful if there is a bullying or friendship issue.

What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP may ask to see you regularly to assess your child's progress.

Your GP may also discuss the results of any tests, including blood, hearing, and vision tests. If your child's behaviour is not improving, your GP may talk about further referrals.

What can I do?

Treating and managing behaviour concerns takes time and patience. There may not be a 'quick fix'. Try to stay positive through this process.

- **Support your child** – continue to be attentive and care for them
- **Talk to your child** – ask if there are any issues with friends or bullies
- **Encourage positive behaviour** – and set clear consequences for negative conduct
- **Look after yourself** – this can be a stressful time, so don't forget to care for your health and wellbeing, too

If your child's conduct is related to school, talk to the school. Ask if there are any strategies the school has put into place. Also, consider asking the school how your child is going with their schoolwork. This can be useful for you and your GP.

Supporting yourself

Remember to look after your health, too. Here are some helpful support sites:

HIPPY
hippyaustralia.org.au

Raising Children
raisingchildren.net.au

Families NSW
Love, talk, sing, read, play
families.nsw.gov.au

Resourcing Parents
resourcingparents.nsw.gov.au

What questions should I ask my doctor?



- ☐ *What can I do to help my child now?*
- ☐ *What can I do to help my child over time?*
- ☐ *When should I make another appointment?*
- ☐ *What happens if my child gets worse?*
- ☐ *How often should I see you?*
- ☐ *How should I respond to my child's behaviour?*

What supports are available?

Early intervention programs

SWSLHD Primary and Community Health Psychology provide free assessment and intervention for children 12 years or under for behavioural concerns. This service is based in most of the community health centres. To refer, call **8788 4200**

Private health professionals

You can access paediatricians or allied health professionals. Speak to your GP about rebates. Contact your local council about local parenting courses and groups.

Support for babies and toddlers

- **Early childhood health centres** – arrange health checks through Triple I: phone **1800 455 511**
- **Tresillian** – help with sleep and settling: phone **1800 637 357** or visit tresillian.com.au
- **Karitane** – help for families with young children: phone **1300 227 464** or visit karitane.com.au
- **Healthdirect Australia Pregnancy, Birth & Baby** – free helpline and health advice: phone **1800 882 436** or visit healthdirect.gov.au
- Families NSW – for early intervention resources: families.nsw.gov.au

Where can I find out more?

The following resources can help you to learn more about behaviour:

- **Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters:** hippyaustralia.org.au
- **National Disability Insurance Scheme:** ndis.gov.au
- **Raising Children's Network:** raisingchildren.net.au