

HELP ME. DON'T HIT ME.



Our hospitals are safe spaces for children and families to receive care and support, without fear of physical or emotional harm.

Hitting, no matter what the intent, strains the parent-child relationship by creating an environment of fear, confusion and anxiety.

If you're struggling to manage your emotions – reach out for help when you need it. Hitting is not the answer.

The facts



More than 1500 scientific studies show that smacking is harmful



Smacking shrinks the brain

Children who are smacked just once a month have 14-19% smaller brains in the decision making area¹.



Smacking negatively affects a child's IQ

- Children smacked between 2 and 4 years of age have 5 less IQ points.
- Children smacked between 5 and 9 years of age have 2.8 less IQ points².



Regular smacking is consistently associated with:

- increased rates of aggression/fighting
- negative relationships with parents and carers
- antisocial behaviour
- increased levels of anxiety and lower self-esteem
- substance abuse
- increased mental health problems
- lower intellectual ability
- poor impulse control³.

Hitting is not the answer

Hitting (or smacking) focuses on the behaviour and misses the underlying needs of the child.

It might stop a child from doing something in the moment, but they still haven't learnt how to do things differently next time.

Smacking can lead to built-up resentment and hostility, and stop some children from talking to parents about their worries, for fear of further punishment.

“I was smacked and I turned out okay”

Every time we smack a child, we increase their risk of developing short or long term problems.

Today, thanks to ongoing studies and scientific research, we have a better understanding of how children learn and develop and the negative impact hitting has on a child's health and wellbeing.

The alternative

There are less harmful and much more effective ways of teaching and managing behaviours – that don't have the risks associated with hitting.

¹[Tomoda, 2010]. ²[Straus, M., 2009]. ³Gershoff, 2016.



Download our information sheets with practical tips, advice and links to more information on managing behaviours in children and young people.



The Sydney
children's
Hospitals Network