

Separation Anxiety

Is getting upset, crying, clinging, resisting attention from others, when a parent leaves.



Tips for Coping with Separation Anxiety

New childcare, new sibling, moving, or tension at home may cause separation anxiety.

- **Timing is everything.** Introduce your child to new people & places gradually. Try not to start childcare with an unfamiliar person when your child is between the ages of 8 months & 1 year (when separation anxiety first appears).
- **Schedule leaving after naps or feeding.** Children are more likely to feel anxious when tired or hungry.
- **Practice separation.** Leave your child with a caregiver for short periods to get used to being away from you.
- **Be calm, consistent & confident in your child.** Tell them you'll be back & explain when (ex: after lunch).
- **Create a goodbye ritual** – a pleasant, loving & firm good-bye giving your full attention (a wave or kiss).
- **When you say you're leaving, mean it** - coming back will only make things worse.
- **Keep familiar surroundings & make new surroundings familiar.**
Have the sitter come to your house or let your child bring a familiar object when away from home.
- **Make sure you return when promised.** Eventually, your child will remember that you always return & it will comfort them. This helps them develop confidence & know that they can make it through the time apart.
- **Have confidence that the caregiver can handle it.** Set up a time to call & check in (15 to 20 minutes after you leave). By that time, most kids have calmed down & are playing with other things.
- **Try not to give in.** Reassure them they will be fine—setting limits will help them adjust to separation.
- **Have a consistent primary caregiver.**

Did you know...

You shouldn't try to avoid separation anxiety by sneaking away when your child isn't looking? This is tempting but experts agree that it is likely to produce even more anxiety. Instead, say a loving but quick good-bye, even if your child cries & screams.

A consistent pattern of **attentive good-byes & happy reunions**, can build your child's confidence in you & your relationship. It also helps your child develop coping skills & independence.



Babies between **4-7 months** realize you've gone when they don't see you. Babies between **8 months & 1 year** may become upset when a parent leaves. They don't know if or when you'll come back. **Whether you're in the next room or at work - you've disappeared!**



Talk to your family doctor or health care provider if intense separation anxiety lasts into preschool, elementary school, or beyond & interferes with daily activities.