



Separation Anxiety in Children



Overview

Your young child wants to be by your side all the time. They get scared and upset when you need to leave them, even for a brief time. We call this "separation anxiety." Let's learn more about it, and how to manage it.

Normal part of development

First, why does it happen? Well, it's a normal part of your child's development. When they're young, nearly all kids go through a stage when they cling to parents and caregivers. Most children outgrow this by the time they're about three years old.

How can you help your child?

Separation anxiety is stressful for you and your child. So, how can you manage it? First, come up with a ritual that you use every time you need to leave your child. It can be as simple as giving them a hug, saying goodbye, and telling them when you'll be back. And come back when you say you will. Be calm and consistent. If you need to leave your child with someone new, practice first. Take your child to meet them for a few short visits. Give your child a chance to get used to the new person before you leave them.

Separation anxiety disorder

If your child's separation anxiety is severe and lasts for a long time, they could have a condition we call "separation anxiety disorder." Talk to your doctor about this. With treatment, it can get better.