



# When You Are Away From Your Child

## SEPARATION ANXIETY

When infants reach 4 to 5 months, they begin to realize they are individuals. As infants reach 8 months, they start to become attached to adults who are special to them or who spend a lot of time with them. Toddlers about 18 months also go through this phase, which is known as separation anxiety. It is a normal part of your child's development. During this phase, the child does not want to be separated from his or her parents or from other familiar adults.

Infants and toddlers who experience separation anxiety do not like adults to leave or say good-bye. Your child may cling to you and cry as you leave him or her. Remember that separation anxiety is a normal phase in your child's life, and it will get better.

### How can I deal with separation anxiety?

- Prepare your child for your leaving. Tell him or her where you are going and when you will be back.
- Make sure to say good-bye each time you leave. This will help your child understand that you are leaving but that you will come back to pick him or her up.
- Ask the childcare provider to hang pictures of your family where your child can see them during the day.
- Provide a consistent good-bye routine so that your child is not confused or upset.
- Try to help your child gradually adjust to the person who will be taking care of him or her.
- Let your child take something familiar to the childcare setting.

## QUALITY CHILDCARE

For you as a parent, finding good childcare can be challenging. The thought of leaving your child with someone else to care for him or her can be painful and overwhelming. If you find someone you can trust to care for your child, then the transition will be easier for you and your child.

With so many working mothers needing childcare

for their infants, it is sometimes difficult to find quality childcare for babies or toddlers. With limited enrollments, some quality childcare facilities have a waiting list for future openings. Depending on your situation, you may need to begin inquiring and making arrangements for childcare before your baby is even born.

It is important to find quality childcare for your child. All children need a setting where they will thrive and be safe. Caregivers should understand the healthy development of children. Children need to be talked to, played with, and given love and attention. A child must have a good, secure relationship with his or her caregiver.

Use this publication to help guide you in finding quality childcare.

### What are the qualities of a good caregiver?

- Caregiver understands children and is sensitive to their needs.
- Caregiver knows how children grow and learn.
- Caregiver is well trained.
- Caregiver is dependable in attendance.
- Caregiver has good relationships with the families of the children he or she cares for.

### What should I look for when choosing childcare?

- Caregiver spends time holding, cuddling, and talking to the children.
- Parents are encouraged to become involved in the care of their children.
- Parents are welcome to visit at any time.
- Equipment and materials are safe, clean, and well cared for.
- Children are allowed to explore materials in the room.
- Children are served nutritious meals and snacks at appropriate times. The menus used in childcare should be posted and based on USDA recommendations.

- ❑ Children have opportunities to learn language through talking, playing, and interacting.
- ❑ Indoor and outdoor areas for childcare are clean and safe, and they allow children to relax and be comfortable.
- ❑ Caregivers are adequate in number for the children under their care (low adult-to-child ratio).

**WHAT ARE THE BEST ADULT-TO-CHILD RATIOS?**

- 1 adult to 3 infants
- 1 adult for every 4-5 children at 1-2 years
- 1 adult for every 6-7 children at 2-3 years
- 1 adult for every 10 children at 3-5 years

**What are my choices for childcare?**

As you try to decide who will care for your child and where your child will be cared for, take care to look at all of your choices. Options can include in-home care, care by family/relatives, and center-based care.

*In-home care* is very convenient and flexible. In-home care means a caregiver comes to your home to care for your child. If you choose this option, ensure that you provide playtime with other children. The caregiver will need to provide stimulating learning activities and a routine schedule. If you choose this option, however, you may have problems finding a substitute if the childcare provider gets sick.

*Care given by family/relatives* gives your child the opportunity to be in a family setting and to play with children of different ages. As with in-home care, learning activities may be limited, and you may have to find another provider if your regular provider gets sick.

*Center-based care* allows your child to interact with other children and to participate in planned learning activities. Make sure the caregiver-to-child ratio is low.

**How do I investigate before making my final decision?**

After choosing what type of childcare provider you want to use, it is time to get started. Ask friends and family about childcare providers they have used or know about. Next, make a list of potential providers - those you believe are reliable. You must then interview the providers and tour the daycare centers or the homes of childcare providers.

You want a provider who will give quality care, so be critical in assessing your child's needs. As you visit in different childcare settings, observe the providers interacting with the children in their care. Make sure the provider is interacting well with the children, that the children are involved in learning activities, and that you get a positive impression of the facilities.

**How can I check on the childcare?**

Once you have made the decision about your childcare provider, keep involved with your selection. Drop in unexpectedly at different times and on different days. Watch how your child reacts to the childcare arrangement. Do not hesitate to discuss your concerns with the childcare provider.

For more information about childcare, contact your county Extension office.



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