

Separation Anxiety Disorder

What is Separation Anxiety?

- Children with Separation Anxiety Disorder (SAD) experience fear, nervousness, or anxiety when away from a loved one that the child is attached to – usually a parent or primary caregiver.
- While separation anxiety is normal in young children, it is called a disorder if the child is over 6 years old, and the anxiety interferes with important life activities and lasts longer than 4 weeks.

What are the signs and symptoms that my child is having difficulties as a result of Separation Anxiety?

- Unrealistic or lasting worry that something bad will happen to either themselves or their caregiver.
- Common signs include refusing to go to school in order to stay nearby their caregiver, fighting sleep due to nightmares, intense fear/guilt, an intense fear of being alone, and bedwetting.

Treatments for Separation Anxiety

- Effective treatments for separation anxiety disorder should include teaching the child how to separate from the caregiver and practice separating so children can learn to function on their own. Therapies include talk and play therapy, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), and family therapy techniques.
- Children suffering from SAD may have other disorders that may require treatment as well, like OCD, phobias, or depression.