

WHO ARE



YOU?!



**STRANGER ANXIETY AND
HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD
OVERCOME IT**



HAVE YOU EVER...

Been at an event or a family gathering, and your usually cheerful baby is doing just fine... until someone reaches out to hold them, and suddenly the tears start flowing?



Don't worry!



Your baby isn't being rude and no one should take it personally.

This is actually a completely normal part of their development known as
stranger anxiety.



WHAT IS STRANGER ANXIETY?

Stranger anxiety is when babies become fearful, wary or distressed around unfamiliar people.



GENERAL TIMELINE:

0-4 Months

Babies may tolerate being held by others, especially if their needs are met

4-6 Months

Babies start showing preferences for familiar caregivers and may show more wariness with unfamiliar faces

6-9 Months

Stranger anxiety becomes more obvious, as babies recognise familiar vs. unfamiliar people

9-12 Months

Stranger anxiety starts to peak, with babies exhibiting signs of distress when encountering unfamiliar people

This is a sign that baby is developing well,
both cognitively and emotionally



SIGNS OF STRANGER ANXIETY:

Fussing or crying when approached by stranger



Clinging tightly onto or hiding behind caregiver



Freezing or going very quiet in the presence of strangers



Turning or physically moving away from stranger



INTENSITY & EXPRESSION

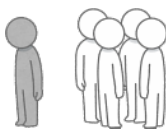
Every child is different, and the intensity and expression of stranger anxiety can be influenced by several factors, including:

Temperament



Babies with high reactive temperaments may have stronger responses to new situations

Social exposure



Regular exposure to diverse social situations helps reduce anxiety levels towards strangers

Parental Response



Calm and supportive responses from parents can help babies feel more secure



What you should and should not do to help your baby through their stranger anxiety.

Do's

Introduce people slowly:

let baby warm up from a safe distance first

Stay physically close:

hold your baby or stay in their line of sight

Validate their feelings:

use comforting words like "it's okay, you're safe"

Have comfort objects

on hand: keep a favourite blanket or toy nearby in new situations

Model calm behaviour:

show friendly body language to new people so baby can read your cues

Don'ts

Force physical contact: do not hand your baby to a stranger if they are distressed

Minimise their fear: avoid saying things like "it's fine", "don't be like this"

Sneak away: disappearing without saying goodbye breaks trust and worsens anxiety

Avoid outings completely: total isolation prevents baby from getting used to social settings

Rush the process: don't expect a quick fix – respect their developmental timeline and go at their pace

Build Confidence



Don't Pressure



While most children naturally outgrow stranger anxiety between the ages of 2-3, look out for these signs which might signal that extra support is needed:

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR:



Persists past toddlerhood: The fear gets worse over time instead of improving

Disrupts daily life: The anxiety prevents your child from attending school or family events

Triggers extreme physical reactions: trembling, vomiting, hyperventilating

Happens even without strangers around: The child shows intense anxiety even when only familiar caregivers are around

Every child develops at their own pace.
When in doubt, always trust your gut
and speak with your pediatrician

