"Loveys," Teddy Bears, and Blankies

HealthySteps®
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Toddlers *love* their favorite objects or "loveys." Their relationship with a stuffed animal or blanket can be more like a deep friendship between two people than between a person and "thing." Toddlers often pick an item and get attached to it. If your child is clingy at child care drop-off, or has trouble sleeping, you can also encourage a lovey. You can help build this relationship by giving them the same item over and over.

Loveys can be both a blessing and a curse. These items ease stress during transitions and when your child has big feelings. However, you may think the world is ending if their special item gets lost. It's still important to support your toddler's relationship with their lovey because it helps them feel secure. It's also a great tool as they learn to calm themselves.

SOME TIPS ABOUT LOVEYS:

- **Get a spare.** If your child gets attached to an item, try to find an extra. Tuck the spare away. That way you can wash one while the other is available. Some people use their sewing skills to cut blankets in half for rotation.

- **Clean the lovey on the sly.** If you don't have a spare, get creative about a washing schedule. Some children get attached to stuffed animals that are not machine washable. Use a damp cloth to spot clean these types of objects. You can also air them out in the sun.

- **Find a substitute if you don't have a spare.** If your child has *one* lovey, you may need to find something else to offer them. Sometimes an article of clothing worn by a caregiver works.

- **Listen to your child's upset feelings.** Your child may have strong feelings if the lovey is missing or needs washing. These emotions usually just need a listening ear. Recognize their sadness and worry. Say, "You really want your blankie right now."

  These items usually get left behind as a child gets more active and independent. Between 3 and 5 years old your child will probably stop paying attention to their lovey. But don't be surprised (or tease them) if it returns in times of stress.

SCAN FOR MORE INFO