

Preventing Separation Anxiety After Covid-19

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During social isolation due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it is important to proactively prevent separation anxiety in your pet, if one or more family members is suddenly home all day with the pet. When you return to your normal work schedule, the transition could be difficult for your pet. Here are some ways you can help prevent separation anxiety.

Tips to help prevent separation anxiety

- Meet your dog's physical, social, and exploratory needs each day through routine, scheduled activities such as play, positive reinforcement training, leashed walks, & environmental enrichment.
 - See our DIY Dog Enrichment videos on fearfreehappyhomes.com for some ideas.
- Teach your dog independence and to be comfortable being left alone or separated from you by a baby gate or door.
- If you are home with your dog for most of the day, make sure you ignore them sometimes and do not make a constant fuss over them. Constant attention when you are home makes it harder for them when you leave.
- Schedule alone time for your dog each day while you go for a walk, pick up groceries, take a short drive, or take a shower.
- Offer your dog a food puzzle toy when you leave to give him something fun to do. Use caution in multiple pet households as some dogs will fight over a food toy.
- Use calming dog pheromones (such as Adaptil) sprayed onto bedding or in a plug-in diffuser and play calming music such as classical or species-specific music at times throughout the day and when you leave the home.
- Catch your dog being calm and when the dog is ignoring you, reward him with calm and pleasant attention.
- Make your arrivals and departures calm and no big deal. Do not make a big fuss over your dog or be overly emotional when you leave the house or when you first arrive home.

If you suspect your dog already has separation anxiety

- Clinical signs often fall into one or all of three categories: excessive vocalization, destructive chewing/scratching, or inappropriate elimination.
- Have your dog evaluated by your veterinarian ASAP. Your veterinarian will ask about the history of the behavior and may perform diagnostic tests before making a behavioral diagnosis.
- Video your dog as you prepare to depart from the home and when left home alone or separated from you. This can help your veterinarian.
- For more on how to identify and alleviate separation anxiety, watch our video series on Canine Separation Anxiety on fearfreehappyhomes.com.

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