Today’s piece was prepared by Vaidehi Pidaparti, MD, based on a Washington Post story entitled, [What separation from parents does to children: ‘The effects are catastrophic’](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/what-separation-from-parents-does-to-children-the-effect-is-catastrophic/2018/06/18/c00c30ec-732c-11e8-805c-4b67019fcfe4_story.html?utm_term=.c3f847a73786).

The story describes effects on children separated from their parents, pertinent in light of the recent US government policy. The author initially described immediate physiological effects, such as the increase in cortisol and adrenaline and their effects on the developing brain. A growing number of physicians (both in pediatrics and mental health) strongly oppose this policy, both for the immediate and long term neurological effects. The journalists describes research done in Romanian orphanages in the 2000s demonstrating separated children having significantly less white and grey matter, with resultant decreased activity in the children’s brains and subsequent lower IQ performance, as well as absent physiologic fight-or-flight responses when faced with stressful situations. These findings were connected to the importance of early parent-child bonding on children’s brain developments and the adverse effects of separation on the amygdala and hippocampus in terms of being unable to differentiate safe from unsafe situations. Similar studies in Australia and China have demonstrated far-reaching effects, such as increased risk of substance or gambling addiction, arrest, as well as mental health issues.

This article supports an emotionally driven message and references a great deal of research from experts in the field of pediatrics and psychiatry, but falls short by failing to identify that cause and effect may be accurate, but cannot be proven via these research designs.

**RESOURCES ON CHILDHOOD CONTACT AND SEPARATION:**[Research on importance of skin-to-skin contact](https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/news-and-research/baby-friendly-research/research-supporting-breastfeeding/skin-to-skin-contact/) *UNICEF*

And that’s today’s Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics: IN THE NEWS!