Helping Families Be Healthy from the Beginning

Caring for Your Baby 4-6 Months

First 1,000 Days®
Caring for Your 4-6 Month Old

1. If breastfeeding, it is best to give your baby only breast milk for the first 6 months.

2. Learn your baby’s signs of hunger and fullness. Only feed when you see signs of hunger, and stop feeding when your baby shows signs of being full.

3. Wait until your baby is ready before starting solid food. If your baby can sit up, bring hands to mouth, shows interest in food, and is 4-6 months old, talk to your doctor about whether it is a good time to start solids.

4. 4-6 month olds need 12-15 hours of sleep a day. Sleep is an important time for healthy growth and brain development.

5. Give your baby active play time every day.

Caring for Yourself

Having a baby is hard and tiring. It is important to take care of yourself.

- Try to be active, eat healthy foods, and get sleep when you can.
- Take time for yourself. Take a walk, talk with a friend, take deep breaths.
- Get support from friends and family when you can. You can also ask the health center about support groups for moms.

If you are feeling very sad or down, or if it gets worse or makes it hard to care for your baby, call the health center to set a time to see a doctor. They are there to help you.

Ask your doctor, nurse, partner, friends, or family for help if you need it.

If you need to talk to someone right away, call the MA emergency services program at 877-382-1609.
Sleep is important!

Sleep is a time for brain development and healthy growth.

- Most babies this age sleep 12 to 15 hours a day. That includes longer sleep at night and 3 or 4 hours of napping during the day.
- By 6 months your baby does not need to feed in the middle of the night to grow, but may be in a habit of night feeding. Talk to your doctor about how to stop feeding during the night.
- It is normal for babies this age to sleep all night, but some still have short times of waking up. Teething can also make it harder for your baby to sleep at this age.
- Read the Sleep Tips below for ways to help your baby work on more regular sleep.

SLEEP TIPS

- **Put your baby to bed sleepy, but awake.**
  This helps babies learn to get to sleep on their own without relying on being rocked, held or nursed to fall asleep.

- **Start a quiet bedtime routine.**
  Get your baby dressed for bed, read a book, sing a song, turn out the lights. Doing this will help your baby know when it is close to bedtime and can help her feel more ready for it.

- **Try to comfort your baby in other ways before feeding.**
  Not all crying or waking up at night means your baby is hungry. Singing, bouncing, or changing a diaper could be what is needed.

If you have concerns about your baby’s sleep, ask your doctor about it.
At 4-6 months, your baby may be ready to try solid foods.

Signs of being ready and able to try solid foods:

- Sits up without help
- Brings hands and toys to mouth
- Shows interest in your food
- Does not automatically push food out of mouth
- Can munch and swallow

Many babies are not ready until 6 months. Let your baby show you when he is ready to start! Then talk to your doctor about if it is ok.

If your baby is not ready, wait.
Starting Solid Foods

When your baby is ready to try solid food, try it at a time when he is happy and not sleepy.

- Your baby should sit up on your lap or in a high chair to be fed.
- Babies only need 1 or 2 tablespoons of a food at a time at first, and you can start by giving it one time a day. Breast milk or formula should still be the main way that your baby is fed.
- Good first foods to try are vegetables mixed with breast milk or formula. Avocado and sweet potato are great! Babies this age should not eat carrots, spinach, squash, beets, or green beans, except in baby food from the store. Do not add salt, sugar, or juice to your baby’s food.
- Try one new food at a time and only offer that food for a few days. Then give a new food to try. After a few months, your baby will eat many kinds of foods. For the first few months, it is just about learning to eat and trying new foods.

Do not put cereal in a bottle. It is not safe and can lead babies to eat more than they need. This can make them gain too much weight. It does not help babies sleep through the night.

Good feeding habits now will help your baby start to learn healthy eating for life.

- Feed in a quiet place with screens off. This will help your baby focus on eating and on being with you. Give your baby your full attention.
- Feed at signs of being hungry and stop feeding at signs of being full. Feeding when your baby is not showing signs of hunger can make it harder for him to know when he is hungry and full. This can lead to eating more than he needs as he grows up.
Babies and Screens

Babies under 18 months should not have any screen time.

This means they should not be in a place where they can see TVs, computers, tablets, or phones that are being watched. Screen time at this age can slow babies learning to talk and read as they get older. It can also add to sleep and attention problems.

Your baby learns best from hearing you talk. TV does not help with this.

If you do video-chatting (like Skype or FaceTime) with family or friends, it is ok to have your baby do that with you.

Play Time for Babies

Your baby is getting stronger and needs time every day to move and explore.

- Keep doing tummy time! When your baby is awake and happy, put her on her tummy a few times a day. This will make her stronger and help her learn to sit, crawl, stand, and walk.
- Set out a toy or mirror for your baby to reach for and look at.
- Put your baby in different positions during the day. Do not leave her in a seat for long periods of time. She needs to spend time moving more freely.
- Sing to your baby, read to your baby, and spend time just looking at and talking to your baby.

Have you started the Boston Basics with your baby? The Boston Basics are 5 fun, simple ways that every family can give every child a great start in life. Learn more at BostonBasics.org.
Baby Growth

Your baby’s doctor will show you a growth chart at most visits. Babies come in all sizes, but for most babies it is healthy to grow along an even curve. If you are worried about how your baby is growing, ask your doctor about it.

This is an example of a growth chart:

The red points mark the length and weight of a baby at different ages.

Points between the lines marked 2 and 98 show the baby is growing at a healthy rate. A point below the 2 line or above the 98 line shows that the baby may weigh too little (below the 2 line) or too much (above the 98 line) for how long they are.
Your Baby’s Growth

Today’s Date: ______________

- Weight ___________ pounds
- Length ___________ inches

Weight for length percentile: ______

Feeding, soothing, and sleep goals:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Check out our short videos to learn more about caring for your baby.

Vidscrip.com/First1000Days

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