



# Six-Month Visit

Congratulations, your baby is 6 months old and having a great time exploring the world! The following are some tips to help you along.

## Feeding and Nutrition

- At this age, your baby will take breast milk or formula 3-5 times a day.
- If you haven't started solid foods yet, begin once a day with 1-2 tablespoons of pureed vegetables, fruit or infant cereal (rice, barley or oatmeal) mixed with breast milk or formula. Start "soupy" and gradually make it thicker. **Don't put food in a bottle.**
- Give one new food at a time and wait 2-3 days before starting another to watch for any signs of an allergic reaction, such as rash, vomiting or diarrhea.
- Mealtime should be fun! Do not force your baby to eat or finish foods. Watch for signs of being full. Stop feeding if your baby leans back or turns away. If your baby doesn't like a new food, try it again in a few weeks. Some babies need to try a new food many times before they like it.
- Over the next few months, gradually increase to 2-3 meals with a variety of foods daily.



- Research shows that earlier introduction of more allergenic foods (peanut butter, fish, eggs) can decrease your baby's risk of allergy. You should start these foods one at a time. Discuss with your doctor first if your baby has eczema or if there is a strong family history of food allergies.
- As your baby approaches 7-9 months, they will want to feed themselves more with their fingers – let them do it. Make sure all food is cut into bite-sized pieces. Avoid foods that may be a choking hazard such as: peanuts, popcorn, hot dogs, whole grapes, raisins, whole beans or hard foods that can be bitten off such as carrots, celery or raw apple.
- Remember not to give your baby honey until after age 1.
- Fruit juice is unnecessary at this age and offers no nutritional value. Giving only breast milk or formula and water is best. If your child seems thirsty between feedings, start offering water in a cup.
- Whole milk should not be introduced until after age 1. Plain, whole milk yogurt and cheese can be started if there is no personal or family history of allergy to dairy.

## Pooping

- As you introduce solid foods, poops will change color, become more solid and have a stronger smell. Your baby may also poop less often. If poops are very loose, watery or full of mucus, decrease the amount of solid foods. If it continues, talk to your child's doctor.

## Safety Tips

1. Your baby's car seat should remain in the back seat facing the rear window.
2. Do not leave your baby alone on the bed, couch or changing table. Never leave your baby alone in the bathtub - even for a second!
3. Don't put your baby in a seated infant walker that wheels around at *any* age. These can lead to serious injuries and may delay walking.
4. **Childproof your home!** Get on your hands and knees to better see what your baby may get into. Keep medicines, cleaning supplies, small or sharp objects, plastic bags and wrappers, balloons, sockets and cords out of your baby's reach. Cover outlets. Use latches on cabinets, gates on stairways and install guards on all windows above the 1<sup>st</sup> floor.
5. Never carry your baby and hot liquids or foods at the same time. To protect from tap water burns, keep your home water heater at 120°F/49°C or lower.
6. Make sure that your smoke detectors are working and properly installed. Change batteries at least once a year.
7. Avoid direct sun exposure from 10am-4pm. Use a wide brimmed hat. Broad-spectrum mineral sunscreens (usually zinc oxide or titanium dioxide) with no oxybenzone is best. Test it first on a small patch of skin.

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### Sleeping

- At this age, babies should sleep through the night (8-12 hours) and take 2-3 naps for an average of 14-15 hours of total sleep/day.
- Using the same bedtime routine helps signal to your baby it is time to sleep.
- **Place your baby in the crib when they become sleepy but are still awake** so they learn to fall asleep on their own (without being fed, rocked or held).
- If your baby wakes up fussing at night, try waiting before responding to see if they can self-soothe back to sleep. If they keep crying, check in but don't turn on the light or pick them up. Instead, gently pat them and/or say "shhh" to let them know you are there.
- Continue to place your baby on their back to sleep. If your baby is already rolling over, they may not stay on their back – this is okay.
- Stop swaddling or using a sleep sack that compresses the arms, chest and body when your baby shows signs of trying to roll over. Sleep sacks that allow free movement can be used indefinitely.
- If you haven't already, lower your baby's crib mattress. Don't put loose, soft bedding, pillows, wedges or stuffed animals in the crib.

### Development

- Babies vary greatly in development. At this age, many babies will:
  - 1) Sit on their own (or with some support) and bear weight on their legs when held under the arms.
  - 2) Pass objects from hand to hand and use their fingers to "rake in" objects.
  - 3) Babble and imitate sounds like "baa".
- Try these tips to help with development:
  - 1) Talk and sing to your baby as much as you can. Narrate out loud. For example, "You are eating your toes!" or "I am putting on your orange striped shirt." Play pat-a-cake and peek-a-boo.
  - 2) Read with your baby everyday! Books with hard cardboard pages and bright pictures are best (don't worry if they put them in the mouth). Screen time (TV/phone/tablet) is not recommended for babies – it does not help them learn and can delay development.
  - 3) Create areas where your baby can safely explore.
  - 4) Encourage your baby to use their body to get what they want. If your baby is showing signs that they want a toy, put it just within their reach.
  - 5) Talk to your doctor if you have any concerns about your baby's development.



### Teething and Oral Care

Teething usually starts between 4-7 months but timing is variable. It may cause mild fussiness, crying, low-grade fever and drooling. To help, gently massage your baby's gums or let them chew on a wet towel. Lidocaine gels are not recommended. Once teeth appear, brush them twice a day using a rice grain size amount of fluoride toothpaste on a soft baby toothbrush. To prevent tooth decay, never let your baby fall asleep with a bottle.

### Immunizations (\*vaccine schedule may vary slightly by practice)

#### Today (some combined):

- DtaP
- Hepatitis B (variable)
- Hib
- Pneumococcal
- Polio
- Rotavirus (oral)



#### Next Visit (at 9 months-old):

- Blood test to screen for lead exposure and anemia

If your baby turns 6 months during flu season, the flu shot is recommended. The first year your baby receives this vaccine, they will need 2 doses one month apart.

### Websites

- AAP Healthy Children [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org) (Health topics and news updates from the American Academy of Pediatrics)
- AAP Immunization Info [www.aap.org/immunization](http://www.aap.org/immunization) (Research-based information about childhood vaccines)

Your child's next routine visit is recommended at 9-months-old.

### Important Numbers

- Poison Control  
800-222-1222
- Parental Stress Line  
800-632-8188
- Domestic Violence Help Line  
617-724-0054 (HAVEN)
- Smoking Quit Line (free)  
800-TRY TO STOP