



# 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.
- Most babies start solids between 4-6 months of age. If you haven't begun yet, start once a day with infant cereal (rice, barley or oatmeal) fortified with iron. Mix 1 tablespoon of cereal with 4-5 tablespoons of breast milk or formula (start "soupy" and gradually make it thicker).
- Always spoon-feed cereal. **Don't put cereal in a bottle.**
- If there is a strong family history of food allergies, discuss with your doctor when to introduce specific foods. Some pediatricians advise against fish and eggs in the first year but there is no evidence that introducing them after 4-6 months increases the risk of allergy.
- Once your baby has mastered cereal, try pureed fruits or vegetables. Offer one new food at a time and wait 2-3 days before starting another in order to watch for any signs of allergic reaction such as rash, vomiting or diarrhea.
- Over the next few months, gradually increase to 2-3 pureed meals with a variety of foods daily (cereal, meats, vegetables, fruits, eggs and fish).



- As your baby approaches 8-9 months, she will want to feed herself with her fingers – let her do it. Make sure all food is chopped 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.
- Don't feed your baby **home-prepared** beets, turnips, carrots, spinach or collard greens in the first year of life (even if they are organic) since they may have high amounts of nitrates that can be harmful to your baby. Jarred store-bought forms of these foods are ok since they are screened for nitrates.
- 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 around 7 months if there is no 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 an infant walker 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, turn your hot water heater down to 120° or lower.
6. Make sure that your smoke detectors are working and properly installed. Change batteries at least once a year.
7. Avoiding direct sun exposure is best (especially 10am-4pm). If not possible, sunscreen (preferably unscented and chemical-free) is ok for babies but test it first on a small patch of skin.

**continued >**

### 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 her crib when she becomes sleepy but is still awake so she learns to fall asleep on her own (without being fed, rocked or held).
- If your baby wakes up fussing at night, try waiting before responding to see if she can soothe herself back to sleep. If she keeps crying, check on her but don't turn on the light, play with her or pick her up. Instead, gently pat her and/or "shhh" to let her know you are there. Contact your doctor if you have questions about sleep training.
- Continue to place your baby on her back to sleep to decrease the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. If your baby rolls over after starting on the back, it is ok.
- 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 she puts it in her mouth). TV 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 her body to get what she wants. If your baby is showing signs that she wants a toy, put it just within her reach.
  - 5) Talk to your doctor if you have any concerns about your baby's development.



### Teething/Oral Care

Teething usually starts between 4-7 months but timing is variable. It may cause mild fussiness, crying, low-grade fever (not >101°F) and drooling. To help, gently massage your baby's gums or let him chew on a wet towel. Before teeth come in, wipe your baby's gums with a moist cloth after feedings (especially before bed). Once teeth appear, brush them twice a day using water on a soft baby toothbrush. To prevent tooth decay, never let your baby fall asleep with a bottle. Ask your doctor if your baby needs fluoride.

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



#### Today:

- DtaP / Polio / HIB (combined)
- Pneumococcal
- Rotavirus (oral)
- Hepatitis B (variable)

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

- Hepatitis B (variable)
- Blood test to screen for lead poisoning and anemia

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

### Websites

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

### Important Numbers

- Poison Control  
1-800-222-1222
- Parental Stress Line  
1-800-632-8188
- HAVEN Domestic Violence Help Line  
1-617-724-0054
- Smoking Quit Line (free):  
1-800-TRY TO STOP
- Your doctor's office

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