

Well Child Care at 6 Months

Feeding

Your baby should continue to have breast milk or infant formula until he is 1 year old. Your baby may soon be ready for a cup although it will be messy at first. Try giving a cup sometimes to see if your baby likes it. Don't put your baby to bed with a bottle. Your baby will see the bottle as a security object and this will make it hard to wean your child from the bottle. Leaving a bottle with your baby, especially at night, will lead to tooth decay and may cause ear infections.

Make cereal with formula or breast milk only. Use a spoon to feed your baby cereal, not a bottle or an infant feeder. Sitting up while eating helps your baby learn good eating habits.

If you haven't started your baby on baby foods (other than cereal), you can start now. Start with pureed fruits, vegetables, and meats. Start one new food at a time for a few days to make sure your baby digests it well. Do not give foods that require chewing. Don't start eggs until age 12 months. Breast-feed or give formula before giving baby food at meals.

Development

At this age babies are usually rolling over and beginning to sit by themselves. Babies squeal, babble, laugh, and often cry very loudly. They may be afraid of people they do not know. Meet your baby's needs quickly and be patient with your baby. If you feel overwhelmed, ask people you trust for help, or talk with your healthcare provider.

Sleep

6-month-olds may not want to be put in bed. A favorite blanket or stuffed animal may make bedtime easier. Do not put a bottle in the bed with your baby. Develop a bedtime routine like playing a game, singing a lullaby, turning the lights out, and giving a goodnight kiss. Make the routine the same every night. Be calm and consistent with your baby at bedtime. If your baby is not sleeping through the night, ask your doctor for further information about preventing sleep problems. And remember, do not put a bottle in the bed with your baby.

Reading and Electronic Media

Books help parent and child grow closer. One way to help your child learn to love reading is to show that you enjoy reading. Pick books with bright colors and large simple pictures. Reading the same books over and over will help your baby to recognize and name familiar objects. Do not prop a baby in front of a television.

Teething

Teeth come in almost constantly from 6 months to 2 years of age. While getting teeth, your baby may drool and chew a lot. It may help to massage your baby's swollen gums with your finger for 2 minutes. A teething ring may be useful.

Safety Tips

Choking and Suffocation

- Cords, ropes, or strings around the baby's neck can choke him. Keep cords away from the crib.
- Keep all small, hard objects out of reach.
- Use only unbreakable toys without sharp edges or small parts that can come loose.
- Avoid foods on which a child might choke (such as candy, hot dogs, peanuts, popcorn).

Fires and Burns

- Check your smoke detector to make sure it is working.
- Keep a fire extinguisher in or near the kitchen.
- Check food temperatures carefully, especially if foods have been heated in a microwave oven.
- Keep hot foods and liquids out of reach.
- Put plastic covers on unused electrical outlets.
- Throw away cracked or frayed old electrical cords.
- Turn the water heater down to 120 °F (50 °C).

Falls

- Keep crib and playpen sides up.
- Do not use walkers.
- Install safety gates to guard stairways.
- Lock doors to dangerous areas like the basement or garage.
- Check drawers, tall furniture, and lamps to make sure they can't fall over easily.

Poisoning

- Keep all medicines, vitamins, cleaning fluids, and other chemicals locked away. Dispose of them safely.
- Put safety latches on cabinets.
- Keep the poison center number on all phones.

Smoking

- Children who live in a house where someone smokes have more respiratory infections. Their symptoms are also more severe and last longer than those of children who live in a smoke-free home.
- If you smoke, set a quit date and stop. Ask your healthcare provider for help in quitting. If you cannot quit, do NOT smoke in the house or near children.

Immunizations

At the 6-month visit, your baby should have a:

- DTaP (diphtheria, acellular pertussis, tetanus) shot
- Hepatitis B shot
- Polio shot
- Pneumococcal (PCV13) shot
- Rotavirus oral vaccine.

Some children also receive a Haemophilus influenza type B (Hib) shot.

Some vaccines can be combined to reduce the total number of shots for your baby.

Your baby may run a fever and be irritable for about 1 day after the shots. Your baby may also have some soreness, redness, and swelling in the area where the shots were given.

You may give acetaminophen drops in the appropriate dose to prevent fever and irritability. For swelling or soreness, put a wet, warm washcloth on the area of the shots as often and as long as needed to provide comfort.

Call your child's healthcare provider if:

- Your child has a rash or any reaction to the shots other than fever and mild irritability.
- Your child has a fever that lasts more than 36 hours.

Next Visit

Your baby's next routine visit should be at the age of 9 months. Bring your child's shot card to all visits.

Written by Robert Brayden, MD, Professor of Pediatrics, University of Colorado School of Medicine.

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