

Six-month checkup time!

It is important to check your baby's growth and development often during this time because she is changing so fast. Write down any questions you have now, so you can ask them at the visit.

Immunizations at six months

Vaccines are given to babies because the diseases they prevent can strike at an early age. An infant who gets a vaccine preventable disease may have serious health problems that will last the rest of his life. The following vaccines are recommended at the 6-month checkup:

- Rotavirus (RV)
- Diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis (DTaP)
- *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib)
- Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV)

Your baby may also get a third dose of hepatitis B vaccine (HepB) and inactivated poliovirus (IPV).

Infants need 2-5 doses of each recommended vaccine. Each dose increases your baby's protection against a specific disease. For the earliest and best protection, your baby needs to complete each vaccine series on time.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) now recommends a yearly influenza (flu) vaccine for everyone 6 months of age and older. The vaccine provides protection throughout the flu season (fall through spring). Infants and young children who get the flu are more likely to develop complications and be hospitalized than older children or younger adults. Everyone who cares for or has contact with your baby should get vaccinated against flu.

Keep your baby's Lifetime Immunization Record card in a safe place and bring it to every visit. Make sure all the vaccine doses he gets are recorded. You will need this record for child care and school.

Early relationships matter

The relationships that your baby is forming, with you and with her other caregivers, will affect the rest of her life. Your baby needs adults in her life that have close, caring relationships with her and meet her physical needs. Remember:

- Your baby has feelings! She needs to feel loved, wanted, welcome and special.
- Respond quickly when your baby cries.
- Your baby learns by playing and by interacting with the adults who take care of her.

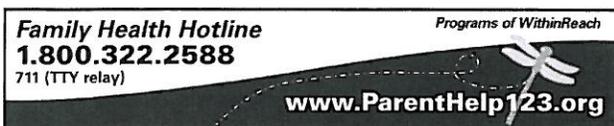
Each baby develops at his or her own pace. If your baby was born early, it may take a while for her development to catch up to full-term babies. You know your baby best. If you have any questions or concerns about her development, talk with your doctor or nurse. You may also call the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588 for the Family Resources Coordinator (FRC) in your area. An FRC will talk with you about your concerns and help you find local services to check your baby's progress.

New teeth coming in

Your baby may have started teething by now. If not, his teeth should start coming in soon. When this happens, the gums often get red and swollen. He may be fussy, and not eat or sleep well. Here are some ways to help make his gums feel better:

- Rub his gums with your clean finger.
- Give him a cold teething ring to chew on.
- Let him chew on the corner of a clean, damp washcloth cooled in the refrigerator.
- Offer cold water in a cup. Make sure there is no ice. Pieces of ice can cause choking.

Wipe teeth and gums daily with a clean, wet washcloth or a very soft, small toothbrush with no toothpaste.



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Keeping Your Baby Healthy and Safe

Tips for starting solid foods

Remember that the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding for at least a year. Breast milk or formula still gives your baby the nourishment she needs. Give her all the breast milk or formula she wants before offering food from a spoon.

At about six months of age, your baby is probably ready to start learning to eat solid foods. Make sure she can sit up well with support and swallow food from a spoon.

Iron-fortified infant cereal is a good first food for formula-fed babies. Mix cereal with formula and make it thin at first. Start out with single-grain cereals, like rice, oatmeal or barley. Baby food meats are a good first food for breastfeeding babies. They provide iron and zinc for healthy blood. You can mix the meat with breastmilk.

Offer solid foods 2 or 3 times a day. Remember that your baby will only eat about 1 to 4 tablespoons per day at first. She will let you know when she has had enough to eat. Your baby may close her mouth tightly, turn her head away, spit out the food, or shake her head.

Introduce only one new food at a time. Offer each new food for a week at a time. If you see signs of a bad reaction (like vomiting, a rash or diarrhea), stop giving her that food and call the doctor or nurse. If there is no bad reaction, you can continue to give her that food and begin to introduce another.

You might try avocado, banana and cooked sweet potato, squash, or peas next. Foods should be peeled and mashed until smooth. Serve at room temperature or slightly warmed. Be sure it is not too hot! Never feed your baby peanut butter or egg whites (because of allergies) or foods made with honey (because of bacteria that causes botulism).

Encourage your baby to move

Crawling, rolling, and wiggling across the floor build your baby's brain and muscles. Give him plenty of tummy time when he is awake and when you can watch him. Get down on the floor and play with him. Put toys just out of reach so he can try to move toward them. Babies who spend a lot of time in play seats, playpens, car seats, strollers, or swings may take longer to crawl or move on their own.



Help your baby fall asleep

A regular bedtime routine may help your baby settle down more easily. This could include giving your baby a bath, changing her diaper, quiet playtime and reading a book. Cuddle her and put her in her crib before she gets too tired. She may like to suck a pacifier for comfort.

To help prevent SIDS, everyone who cares for baby should put her to sleep on her back at nap and bed times.

Baby-proofing tips

Baby-proofing your house can reduce the chance of injury, but you or an adult you trust always need to be close by and watching your baby. Ask her other caregivers to baby-proof their homes, too.

- ✓ Your baby is beginning to crawl and roll around. Get down on your hands and knees often to notice things your baby could find or reach.
- ✓ Clean the floor often. Pick up things she may try to put in her mouth. She could choke on a penny, button, balloon, plastic bag, or older child's small toy.
- ✓ Always keep at least one hand on your baby when she is on a bed, sofa or changing table.
- ✓ Put breakable things out of reach.
- ✓ Put plastic covers on electric outlets.
- ✓ Keep cords, like those on window shades, phones and lamps, out of reach or taped to the wall. Babies can be strangled by cords. They can also pull things down on themselves.
- ✓ Put safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs. Also put gates in doorways to rooms that are not child-proofed. Keep gates closed and latched.
- ✓ Store all cleaners, poisons, vitamins, and medicines on a high shelf in a locked closet or cabinet. Put latches on drawers and cupboard doors.
- ✓ Keep your baby away from the stove and oven, and the microwave when hot food is being taken out.
- ✓ Make sure you have at least one working smoke detector on each level of your home. Check it every month and change the battery at least once a year!

Older baby walkers can be dangerous

Newer baby walkers are safer. They have safety features to help prevent falls down stairs. They are made to be too wide to fit through most doorways and have features that can help stop the walker at the edge of a step. You still need to watch your baby to keep him away from hot surfaces, dangling cords and open water, like swimming pools. Your child may also enjoy a stationary activity center, which does not have wheels.

Keeping your baby healthy

Checkups are important even if your baby seems healthy. The doctor or nurse will check your baby's growth and development and answer any questions you have about your baby's health. Bring his Lifetime Immunization Record card and Childhood Health Record booklet with you to each checkup.

If your baby has missed any vaccine doses, catch up now. Being fully immunized prevents:

- diseases and illnesses that are common but serious, like pertussis and flu
- diseases that are less common, like measles and mumps
- diseases that are common in other parts of the world, like polio.

Be sure you and your baby's other caregivers are up-to-date on immunizations. This protects him, too.

Keep your baby's first teeth healthy

Your baby's first teeth are very important. They help her eat and speak well. They also hold space in her jaw for her permanent set of teeth.

- Look at your baby's teeth carefully once a month. If you notice white or brown spots, or that her gums are bleeding, call her dentist or ask your doctor.
- Your baby should have her teeth checked by a doctor or dentist by her first birthday. Ask if she needs fluoride drops or tablets.
- Clean your baby's teeth and gums every night before bed. Use a moist cloth to wipe teeth or a small, soft toothbrush. Ask your dentist or doctor about whether to use fluoride toothpaste.
- Formula, juice and breast milk that stay in your baby's mouth while she is sleeping can cause cavities. If she falls asleep while breastfeeding, remove your nipple from her mouth. If you must

give her a bottle in bed, fill it with plain water.

- Your baby should be learning to drink from a sippy cup. Remove the lid as soon as she is ready. If you are bottle feeding, plan to wean her from the bottle by age one.
- Bacteria that can cause tooth decay can be easily spread from your mouth to your baby's. Avoid sharing your toothbrush and eating utensils with her.
- Keep your own teeth and gums healthy. Brush and floss daily. This will teach your baby that taking care of her teeth is important.



Babies do not need juice

Drinking juice can make your baby less hungry for the healthy foods he needs to eat. Offer him water when he is thirsty. If you do give your baby juice, choose 100% fruit juice and limit the amount you offer to no more than 1/4 cup (2 ounces) total juice per day. Mix together half juice and half water.

Eat together as a family

Your baby learns about eating by watching you eat. Talk with your baby about the new foods she is tasting, smelling and touching. Small pieces of food that are easy to pick up and soft enough to squish between her fingers are fun for her to touch and taste. Offer her small pieces of dry cereal, toast, soft fruits, cooked pasta and vegetables.

Touching food is her way to learn about it. She will get food all over herself and the floor. **Don't worry about the mess!** Soon you will find that she gets more and more food into her mouth.

Even if your baby has some teeth she is not old enough to eat hard foods. She can choke on foods like grapes or slices of hot dog. Cut food into smaller pieces. Stay near your baby and watch her while she is eating

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Keeping Your Baby Healthy and Safe

Your baby's relationships are important

Because your baby's brain is developing constantly, every moment is important. Your baby's relationships with you and others who take care of him are very important to his health and development. The everyday things that you and all your baby's caregivers do throughout the day help your baby learn and help his brain develop.



- Talk to him while you do things like change his diapers, feed him and bathe him.
- Talk to him about pictures in his books.
- Play copycat games. Make a funny sound and then wait for him to make it. Copy his sounds, too.
- Play peek-a-boo.

Make sure that everyone who takes care of your baby knows how important they are to your baby and to his health and development.

Your baby's development

Remember that each baby develops at his or her own pace. If your baby was born early, it may take a while for her development to catch up to full-term babies. You know your baby best. However, if your baby is not sitting up or making babbling sounds yet, be sure to talk with your doctor or nurse or call the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588 for the name of a Family Resources Coordinator (FRC) in your area. An FRC will talk with you about your concerns and help you find local services to check your baby's progress.

Talk with your doctor about antibiotics

When your baby gets sick, it is common to want to give her medicine to help her feel better. However, do not expect your doctor to always give her antibiotics. Antibiotics do not kill viruses, which are often the cause of colds and ear infections.

Antibiotics treat illnesses caused by bacteria, such as strep throat and infected wounds. If your doctor prescribes an antibiotic, always make sure your baby takes it for as long as your doctor recommends, even if she feels better. The last few doses kill the strongest bacteria.

For more information on antibiotics and ways to help your baby when she has a cold or virus, visit: www.doh.wa.gov/topics/antibiotics.

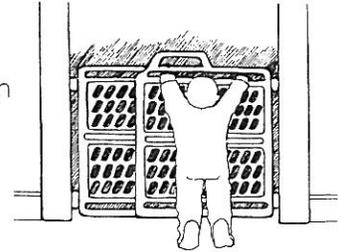
Watch your baby in the bath

A baby can drown quickly and quietly in only a few inches of water! Stay with your baby the entire time he is in the tub. **Do not leave the room**, for even a second, to answer the door or telephone. Even if he sits up well or uses a bath seat, do not leave him alone or with an older child.

Prevent young climbers from falling

A fall could cause cuts, broken teeth and bones, or a head injury. Here are some ways to help prevent falls:

- Move chairs that might tip over so that your child can't climb on them.
- Check the side rails of your baby's crib. If they are not high enough, lower the mattress.
- Keep gates closed at the top and bottom of stairs.
- Safety straps on changing tables, strollers and shopping carts can help prevent baby from falling. But as your baby grows and moves around more, you should always stay close.



Keep your baby's car seat rear-facing

Keep your baby's car seat in the back seat facing the rear of the car. Facing the rear of the car protects her neck and spine from serious injury. Most infant seats can only be used up to 22 pounds (check the label on the seat). When your baby reaches that weight or his head is one inch below the top of the seat, move him to a seat that can be used both rear and front facing. Use this seat facing the rear for as long as possible, until your baby is 30 to 35 pounds.

Dangers of air bags to babies and children

Air bags in cars can kill or seriously injure a baby or child in the front seat, even in a minor crash. Some vehicles, such as pick-up trucks and sports cars, have air bags but have no backseat. These vehicles are **not safe** for carrying infants in rear-facing car seats unless they have an air bag on/off switch that has been turned off. Check your vehicle owner's manual to find out if it has air bags for the front seat.

Remember, the back seat is safest for everyone under age 13.

Questions about airbags?

Visit www.nhtsa.dot.gov for more information.