

# 6 month old check-up



Patient and Family Education

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This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

## TIPS FOR TAKING CARE OF YOUR BABY

### CARING FOR YOUR BABY

- Your baby needs your love. Hold him, rock him and cuddle him.
- Do not be afraid of spoiling your baby.
- Read, talk, sing and laugh with your baby. Your baby will make baby sounds to “talk” back to you.
- Babies cry a lot.
  - When they cry, they are telling you that they need something. They could be hot, cold, hungry or wet. They may also just want to be held, interact with someone, or suck on a pacifier or their fingers.
  - It is OK to let your baby cry for a few minutes.
  - If you get upset with your baby's crying, lay him down in his crib, and go into another room for a few minutes. Call a family member or friend for help.
- Take time out for yourself. Being a parent is hard work, and sometimes you need a break. Ask a family member or good friend who knows about babies to care for your baby, even for just an hour.

### YOUR BABY'S DEVELOPMENT

- Your baby may be able to:
  - Roll from front to back and back to front.
  - Use his leg muscles to stand up when you support him.
  - Start sitting by himself.
- Your baby may like:
  - Music and soft, big toys that he can hold and chew on. He laughs a lot and babbles and coos loudly.
  - Taking a walk outside in the stroller on nice days.
- Your baby may be teething. He may drool and chew a lot.
- Read to your baby every day. Point to things and tell him their names.

### SAFETY

- Crib and changing table
  - Make sure the crib slats are no more than  $2 \frac{3}{8}$  inches apart.
  - Make sure crib rails do not move up and down. If you have an older crib, check with its maker to see if they have special parts to keep the side from moving.
  - Never leave your baby alone on a high place, such as a bed, couch, chair or changing table. Keep one hand on your baby at all times while changing him.
  - Remove hanging mobiles, drapes and blind cords from your baby's reach. This helps prevent choking and suffocation.

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## 6 month old check-up, continued

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- Move the crib away from windows and screens.
- Home
  - If you live in an older home, have it tested for lead.
  - Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Change the batteries twice a year.
  - Keep hot objects like irons, coffee pots and space heaters away from your baby.
  - Keep all electric cords up and out of the way where your baby cannot reach them. This includes items like your cell phone charger.
- Car
  - Make sure your baby rides in a car safety seat every time you go driving, no matter how short the trip.
  - Place the car seat in the back seat, facing towards the rear window. Your baby should ride like this as long as possible. Do not turn him forward-facing until he is at least 2 years old. Make sure the car seat is installed correctly. The seat should be at a 45 degree angle.
  - Do not add anything, such as blankets or harness strap covers, to your baby or the seat unless it is approved by the car seat maker.
  - Buckle the car seat to the car, and buckle your baby into the car seat.
  - Wear your seatbelt, too.
  - When you use a baby seat or car seat to carry your baby, be sure the safety strap is buckled. Never place the seat on a high place, such as a counter, and walk away.
- Smoking
  - Keep your baby away from cigarette smoke. Breathing in second-hand smoke can cause asthma, ear infections and other breathing problems.
- CPR
  - Take a baby CPR course. Call the Red Cross, American Heart Association or a local hospital for more information.

### **A FEW NEVER, EVER'S –**

To help keep your baby safe - **NEVER:**

- Leave your baby alone except in a crib or playpen.
- Leave your baby alone in a car.
- Hold your baby in your lap while riding in the car.
- Leave your baby alone in a sink or bathtub – not even to answer the door or phone or get a towel.
- Put a necklace on your baby or use ribbons or strings to tie a pacifier around your baby's neck. This can cause choking.
- Warm breastmilk or formula in a microwave. This can cause “hot spots” in the liquid and burn your baby.
- Prop a bottle to feed your baby.
- Shake your baby. This can cause brain damage, blindness and death.
- Give your baby honey. Honey sometimes contains germs that can harm babies less than 1 year old.
- Use a baby walker on wheels – it can tip over and harm your baby. Use a baby seat that has legs that sit flat on the ground instead.

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## **6 month old check-up, continued**

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### **BATHING**

- Always test your baby's bath water to make sure it is warm but not too hot. Set your water heater at 120°F or lower. Ask your landlord to do this if you live in an apartment.
- Your baby only needs 3 to 4 baths a week.
- Your baby does not need powders, lotions or gels on his skin unless his doctor tells you to use them.
- If your baby has teeth, brush them with a small, soft toothbrush and water.

### **DIAPER NEEDS**

- Change your baby's diapers when they are wet or soiled. Clean his bottom with mild soap and water, or use disposable wipes. Always wash your hands well when you are done.
- Babies often make faces, grunt or turn red with bowel movements. As long as their bowel movements are soft, there is no need to worry.

### **FEEDING**

- Your baby's doctor may tell you to begin giving him cereal.
  - You can use water, breastmilk or formula to mix the cereal.
  - Do not add cereal to your baby's bottle – feed it to him with a spoon.
- Your baby's doctor may also tell you to begin other types of baby food now. Start with meat, vegetables and fruits.
  - Give your baby only 1 new food at a time, and wait a few days before giving him another new food. This allows you to tell if he is allergic to a food or if it bothers him in any way.
  - Put a small amount of baby food on a dish. Use a small spoon to feed your baby – do not use a bottle or syringe feeder.
- Begin to teach him good eating habits. Have regular meal times for your baby. Sit him up in a highchair to eat.
- Give your baby small pieces of crackers or dry cereal to feed himself. You may also start to let him have sips of water from a cup.
- To help prevent problems with your baby's new teeth, even before they come in:
  - Do not prop his bottle. This can lead to tooth decay. It can also cause ear infections.
  - Wipe your baby's teeth and gums with a clean, wet cloth after each feeding.
  - Do not clean your baby's pacifier or bottle nipple by putting it in your mouth. Your saliva may contain germs that can cause problems and tooth decay for your baby.

### **Breastfeeding**

- Eat a healthy diet with fresh fruits, vegetables and proteins like meats, nuts, beans and eggs.
- Drink milk or eat other good sources of calcium, such as yogurt, cheese, green leafy vegetables, fortified orange juice or dried beans.
- Keep taking your prenatal vitamins.
- Breastfed babies need vitamin D drops. Ask your baby's doctor about how many vitamin D drops to give. Also ask the doctor if your baby needs any other supplements, such as iron.
- Check with your doctor before taking any medicines. Many of them pass through your breastmilk to your baby.

### **Bottle feeding**

- Give your baby formula to drink. He is not old enough for cow's milk.

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- Your baby may be holding his own bottle much of the time. If so, be sure to still hold him at times during the day so he feels close to you.

### SLEEP

Your baby should be sleeping through the night by this age. Have a regular bedtime and routine for your baby. This is one more way that you can help him feel more secure.

- Sing to your baby, or read him a book before he goes to sleep.
- Put your baby in the bed while he is still awake, so he can get used to falling asleep by himself.
- If your baby cries each night at bedtime when you leave him, this is OK. Allow him to cry for 10 to 15 minutes before going to him. He will gradually learn to go to sleep on his own.
- Do not give your baby a bottle to take to bed. This can cause tooth decay, ear infections and other problems for your baby.

### HEALTHY HABITS

You can help keep your baby and your family healthy when you:

- Wash your hands often during the day. Have other family members wash their hands often too. Use warm water and soap and scrub for 20 seconds.
- Make sure your baby gets needed vaccines to help prevent disease.
- Keep your baby away from cigarette smoke. Breathing in second-hand smoke can cause asthma, ear infections and other breathing problems.
- Do not give your baby **ANY** medicines unless you talk to the doctor first.

Your baby learns through play. Avoid screen time until he is 2 years old. Some examples of screen time are:

- TV
- Computers
- Videogames
- Tablet devices
- Smart phones

### IF YOUR BABY EVER SEEMS ILL

If your baby feels too warm or seems ill, check his temperature with a thermometer.

- Call the doctor if your baby has a temperature over **102.2°F or 39°C**, seems ill or you have any concerns.
- For babies less than 2 years old – take the temperature in the rectum (opening in the bottom where the bowel movement or stool comes out). Other methods are not as accurate in babies.
- Do not give your baby any medicines before talking with the doctor. This includes acetaminophen (Tylenol or other less costly store brand) and ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil or other less costly store brand).

### FOR YOUR BABY'S NEXT VISIT – 9 months old

- You and your baby's doctor can talk about how things are going with your baby.
- Your baby will have a physical examination (check-up) that may include getting vaccines. You will have a chance to ask questions.
- You may want to talk about your baby's:

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## 6 month old check-up, continued

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- Feeding and sleeping
- Safety
- Development

### THINGS FOR YOU TO DO

Begin to baby-proof your house. Your baby will soon start to move around on his own. Make sure he is safe by removing unsafe items that are within his reach. Some ideas include:

- Block stairs with stair gates.
- Lock windows and screens.
- Put childproof locks on drawers and cabinets that contain harmful items, such as cleaning supplies, medicines and matches.
- Put plug covers on electric outlets.
- Use back burners of the stove for cooking, and place pot handles towards the rear. Put knob covers on the stove.
- Do not let your baby play near the stove or next to you when you are cooking.
- Keep him away from the fireplace and other hot items such as irons, coffee pots and space heaters.
- Furniture, shelves, TVs and ranges can tip over and hurt your child. Secure them to the floor or the wall, or use anti-tip brackets as needed.
- Pad sharp corners of furniture or the fireplace.
- Put a lock on the toilet seat.
- Keep small toys and objects that he could choke on out of reach.
- Keep plastic bags, ropes and strings out of reach.
- Lock up guns and bullets.
- Store knives, scissors, razor and other sharp items in a safe place.

Also:

- Keep a record of when your baby is ill or hurt. Share this record with your baby's doctors.
- Make a list of questions to talk with your doctor about at the next visit.
- Bring your baby's shot (vaccine) record to your next visit.

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