

# Caring for your baby: 6 months

Your baby has reached the six-month milestone and may be smiling and laughing, rolling over, eating some solid foods, and saying a few first words. Here are some tips to help you care for your child as they begin to expand their horizons more and more.

## Feeding your baby

- Breast milk is the healthiest food for your baby. If you can, continue breastfeeding until your baby is at least 12 months old.
- The advantages of breastfeeding continue for you and your baby as long as you continue to breastfeed.
- Breastfeed your baby on demand (baby decides when and how long to nurse).
- Introducing solid food at this time should not take the place of breast milk.
- If you don't breastfeed or stop breastfeeding, use iron-fortified formula (not low iron formula) until your baby is one year old.
- Never warm bottles in the microwave.
- At this age, your baby can have many solid foods. Healthy choices are fruits, vegetables, cereals, meats, and dairy products. All solid foods, including nuts, need to be pureed to prevent choking.
- Always check the temperature of formula with a few drops on your wrist before feeding. Do NOT warm bottles in a microwave.
- Introducing certain foods early, such as peanut products, can help prevent food allergies. This is especially true if your baby has eczema.
- Do not give your baby honey during the first year.
- If your drinking water is not fluoridated, your doctor may recommend fluoride to prevent tooth decay.
- Make sure your baby is getting 400 IU of vitamin D every day.

## Practicing healthy habits

- Don't let anyone smoke in your home or car. Smoking around your child increases their risk of ear infections, asthma, and pneumonia.

- Sunlight is a good source of vitamin D. Be sure to use sunscreen (hypoallergenic, SPF 15 or more) and a hat when your baby is outside for more than 10 minutes.
- Give water in a cup, not a bottle.
- Do not put your baby to bed with a bottle.
- If your baby has teeth, clean them with a damp washcloth or soft toothbrush after meals and at bedtime.
- Make sure your baby's doctor checks your baby's mouth at each visit. Ask about fluoride.
- Wash your hands before feeding and after changing diapers.
- Take your baby for walks.

## Keeping your baby safe

- Never leave your baby alone at home, or in a car or bathtub, even for a moment.
- Always check water temperature before putting your baby in a bath.
- Do not drink hot liquids near your baby.
- Prevent poisoning. Store all medicines, drugs, poisons, and alcohol in a locked cabinet, out of sight. Keep purses out of reach. If you think your child has been poisoned, call Poison Control at toll-free **1-800-222-1222** (voice and TDD).
- Do not keep medicines or other drugs in your purse. Have visitors keep their purses out of reach (for child-proofing checklist see other side).
- Do not use baby walkers. They are dangerous.
- Remove bumper pads from crib, and anything baby can reach.

## Other parenting tips

- Play games like peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake.
- Let baby play in a safe place.

*Continued next page*

- During teething, use teething rings or gently rub the gums. Use non-aspirin acetaminophen drops for severe pain.
- For information about child care, call The Family Center at Childcare Aware of Washington toll-free **1-800-446-1114**.

## Child-proofing checklist

### Gun safety

- ☐ If you have a gun in the house, keep it unloaded and locked up.

### Avoid falls

- ☐ Use child-proof window locks or guards on all windows above the first floor.
- ☐ Use safety gates at top and bottom of stairs.

### Avoid choking

- ☐ Keep electrical or telephone cords out of child's reach. Hang cords from drapes or blinds, out of reach.
- ☐ Keep older children's small toys out of reach.

### Electrical and fire safety

- ☐ Unplug appliances when not in use.
- ☐ Put plastic safety plugs in all electrical outlets when not in use.
- ☐ Have a fire escape and earthquake plan.
- ☐ Screen off fireplaces and other heat sources.
- ☐ Install smoke detectors and test monthly.

### Bathroom safety

- ☐ Install safety latches on bathroom and kitchen cabinets, and toilet lids.
- ☐ Keep bathroom doors closed.
- ☐ Turn water heater temperature down to low or warm (below 120° F).

### Avoid drowning

- ☐ Do not leave buckets, containers of water, or other liquids on the floor.
- ☐ Make sure baby is wearing a life jacket when near water.
- ☐ Cover and lock hot tubs and spas.
- ☐ Fence swimming pools on all sides and have a self-latching gate.

### Kitchen safety

- ☐ Turn pot handles toward back of stove when cooking.

### Avoid poisoning

- ☐ Keep medicines in original childproof containers. Keep medicines, alcohol, cleaning products, and all poisons in a locked cabinet, out of sight.
- ☐ Avoid remodeling, drilling, sanding, or scraping walls if your house was built before 1960 (paint may contain lead).
- ☐ Avoid using home remedies like Azarcon (Alarcon, Liga, Maria Luisa, Coral, Rueda), Greta, Pay-loo-ah, Bokhoor (galena), Al kohl, Bint al zahab, Farouk, Kushtas, Ghasard, Bala goli, Kandou, or Surma.
- ☐ Remove poisonous plants. Call Poison Control at toll-free 1-800-222-1222 if you think your child has eaten any part of a plant. Here is a partial list of some common plants.

### Safe plants

African Violet • Boston Fern • Christmas Cactus  
 Coleus • Ficus • Firethorn • Hens and Chicks • Hibiscus  
 Jade • Norfolk Pine • Rubber Plant • Spider Plant  
 Wandering Jew • Yucca

### Poisonous plants

Autumn Crocus • Begonia • Black Locust • Buttercups  
 Chrysanthemum • Dutchman's • Breeches • English Ivy  
 Iris • Jerusalem Cherry • Common Moonseed  
 Peace Lily • Pothos • Tulips (Bulbs) • Yew (Taxus species) • Wisteria

### Deadly plants

Castor Bean • Jimson Weed • Nightshade • Oleander  
 Pokeweed

### Next well-child visit at 9 months old

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