

# My Six-Month-Old & Me

*Recommendations from your Pediatrician*

“He always wants to sit up and see everything!”

Your baby is half-a-year old now and has many skills:

Sitting- Baby will sit with some support from his arms. He will try earnestly to pull himself up to the seated position, even to the point of frustration. It's okay to help him a bit! Diaper changes are going to be challenging at times when he does not want to lie still for even a second.

Exploration- Baby continues to have improved vision and hearing. He will take more notice of himself in a mirror. As one parent said, “If he sees his reflection smile, he keeps smiling. If his reflection is crying, he keeps crying.” You may notice your baby turns more directly to sounds than previously. He will find body parts that he did not notice before: toes, fingers, hands, and ears. Baby may even find private parts during diaper changes!

Rolling over- This can happen in a split second, so take care to never leave your baby on high surface, not even a bed. Baby will begin to crawl backwards and creep a bit over the next few months. Time to get on your hands and crawl at his level to be sure the house is baby-proofed!

Babbling- Baby will begin to make some consonant sounds now. Generally, syllables such as “da”, “ba”, and “ga” will be spoken before “ma”. It doesn't mean that Baby loves “mama” any less than “dada”. Baby will probably call almost everything “dada” at this age.

Transferring toys- This begins a big milestone for Baby. You may notice soon that Baby can move a toy from one hand to the other. He is becoming much more skilled with his hands. He will become particularly interested in putting his fingers in your mouth, face, ears, and hair when you hold him.

## **Ideas for Play:**

- Look at board books with Baby. Don't be concerned about reading all the words or every page. Allow Baby to explore the book by hitting it, patting it, and putting it in his mouth. Point to pictures in the book and say the name of the object.
- Let Baby explore food in his highchair. Undress baby except for his diaper and put some food (mashed or pureed) directly on the table surface of his high chair. While he explores the food with his fingers, he will let you spoon-feed him. Be prepared for a mess! This is a good technique for introducing new foods once a week because it allows him to explore the food on his own a bit before it is placed into his mouth.

- Let Baby have a little time to himself to play with teething rattles or other baby safe toys in his pack-n-play or crib. Baby may be content to play alone for a while. This is fine and normal. You should not feel as if you need to entertain him constantly.
- Peek-A-Boo- Still an excellent game at this age for teaching that objects and people are present even when not seen! He may start to look over the side of his high-chair when an object is dropped.
- Help develop social skills by teaching games such as “Pat-a-cake” and “Itsy bitsy spider”.
- Go for a walk once a day! This is an excellent habit for the whole family to develop. You are teaching Baby at a young age that it is fun to be outside and exercise-even if it is mommy and daddy doing all the exercise while Baby reclines in the stroller or backpack!

### **Sleeping:**

- Baby will probably still need 2 naps at this age. Keep the afternoon nap early so it does not hamper the night-time sleep.
- Baby will be more alert and ready to learn during the day if he receives about 10-12 hours of consolidated sleep at night. Remember to keep a consistent bedtime routine and actual bedtime. You determine wake-up time, not baby. Remind yourself that you know what is best for him more than he does.
- Baby may wake up between her sleep cycles at night time (about every 3 hours). Allow him some time to go back into deep sleep before “rescuing him”. If he begins to cry strongly, give him a pacifier or gently pat him for a moment. Avoid strong eye contact as this is very stimulating and will pull him completely out of sleep. Parents who pick up Baby, rock him back to sleep or feed him back to sleep are setting themselves up to be part of her sleep pattern for a long time to come.
- Avoid feeding Baby during the night time as this will teach him to rely on feedings at night as part of his sleep routine, setting him up for excessive weight gain, interrupted sleep and dental cavities. Yes, he will have teeth soon!

### **Feeding Baby:**

By now, Baby has enough skills and head control to begin solid foods:

- It is good to introduce a new food every week (or 3-4 days). If he breaks out with a rash or has an upset stomach, avoid that food for a few months.
- You can make your own baby food by mashing, finely chopping or pureeing the foods you cook for dinner.
- You can also serve him the Stage 1 baby foods.
- Avoid foods that are more likely to cause allergies (i.e., eggs, peanut butter, citrus fruits, shrimp).
- Start with rice cereal (2oz water or breast milk mixed with 4-6 Tbsp rice cereal for babies) and then move to other grains such as oatmeal or mixed cereals.
- Begin meats (ground chicken, beef, or fish) at 7 months of life.
- Initially, you will give one solid food feeding per day and work your way to a 3 meal per day program as your baby seems interested.



- Do not present “finger foods” such as grapes, raisins, Cheerios, and uncooked vegetables yet, as they are choking hazards.
- Baby needs no juice yet. If you give Baby apple or prune juice for constipation, give no more than 4 ounces one time a day. Do not give it more than once a day (even if diluted) as this will cause cavities once the teeth erupt. Silver caps across the front teeth in childhood is avoidable by limiting juice to no more than once per day and eliminating night time feedings at this young age.
- Continue to give Baby cereal by spoon once or twice per day even as you introduce other foods, as it is full of vitamins and minerals that are important for healthy growth.
- Begin to develop a pattern of breakfast, lunch, and dinner along with bottle feeds.

### **Safety Tips for Parents of Six-Month-Old Baby**

- Use an Infant Rear-Facing Car Seat in the back seat until one year old and 20 pounds. You may need to use a convertible (larger size) car seat if the shoulder straps are below the level of the shoulders (on the back), but keep it facing the rear of the car until 2 years old. The local fire department will help you put in the new car seat securely.
- Use tap water for mixing in formula or cereals as it contains a proper amount of fluoride. It does not need to be boiled any longer.
- Use sunscreen and insect repellent when outdoors (especially summer).
- Do not use old fashioned baby walkers. They do not help Baby walk any faster and can cause falls with head trauma and severed or squashed finger tips.
- Baby-Proof your home. Use the following checklist:
  1. Safety lock cabinet doors.
  2. Prevent access to chairs with baby gates.
  3. Put plastic plugs in outlets.
  4. Put safety lock on toilet seat cover.
  5. Never leave a mop bucket or container of water around for even a short time. It only takes a moment to drown!
  6. Put self-locking gate around swimming pool.
  7. Do not leave “kiddy pools” filled.
  8. Lower crib mattress when baby starts to pull to a stand
  9. Call Poison Control 1-800-222-1222 if baby ingests anything other than food.