

## Well Baby Visits: Six Months

Your baby is now 6 months old! Babies at this age start to move around a lot more (roll, sit, try to crawl), so now is a good time to childproof your home. Many babies will start to settle into a more regular sleep pattern. They may laugh and smile readily at familiar faces, siblings, or during play.

Babies will receive their third set of infant vaccines at this visit. Some caregivers may choose to introduce baby foods in addition to breast milk and/or formula. Talk with your child's doctor about what foods to start feeding your baby at 6 months old.

### Growth and Development

- Your doctor will go over your baby's growth trends at this visit. Most infants have doubled their birth weight at this age.
- At 6 months, many babies will roll in both directions (back to stomach, stomach to back) and begin to sit without support for a few seconds at a time.
- Over the next few months, your child will begin to add different sounds to their "practice talking," including consonant sounds (ba-ba-ba, etc.) and may laugh out loud when tickled or entertained. You may start to notice a "conversational" tone to their babbling, with pauses for response from a caregiver.

### Nutrition

- At this age, you may start to introduce baby foods to your child's diet. Please talk with your child's doctor about the safest way to do this. Many doctors want you to try to feed your baby only pureed, one-ingredient foods, and try only one new food at a time (**Picture 1**).
- Once your baby is sitting up easily, let him sit in a highchair or other upright chair at mealtimes. Even if your baby does not eat on the same schedule as you, he will enjoy the family time.
- Pay attention to your baby's body language; if he or she seems upset or uninterested in eating (turning face away, arching back), stop offering the meal and try again later.
- If your baby seems not to like a certain food, try it again in a few days or weeks. Many babies will learn to like foods after several tries, even if they do not seem to like it the first time.



**Picture 1** Feed your 6-month old new foods while sitting.

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## Nutrition, *continued*

- At this age, babies can begin to learn to drink from sip cups.
- Babies still get most of their nutrition from breast milk and/or formula at this age. Cow's milk should **not** be given to children until 1 year of age.
- It is important that your child gets enough iron. Infant formulas have added iron and breast-fed babies get iron from mother's milk. As your baby eats more foods and drinks less formula or breast milk, iron-fortified infant cereal can help him get enough iron.

## Safety

- Now is the time to safety-proof! Your doctor will talk with you about how to make your home a safer place for a child. Cover outlets with plain safety covers. Install cupboard latches and toilet-lid locks. Move medicines, cleaning products, and chemicals to high, locked cabinets. Put safety gates between rooms, and at the top and bottom of stairs.
- Infants should stay in a rear-facing car seat in the back seat until they are 2 years of age. Car seats should meet or exceed the limits set by the manufacturer for height and weight.
- NEVER leave your baby alone in the bathtub, car, or on a changing table, bed or sofa.
- Keep items that can cause choking or suffocation away from your baby. Examples are plastic bags, balloons, window blind strings, coins, button batteries, marbles, pen caps.

## Other Common Concerns:

- Consider introducing oral care to your infant at this age, using a soft baby toothbrush, finger brush or washcloth. If you use toothpaste, it should not have fluoride. This will allow your child to become used to routine oral care, even though many infants do not have visible teeth at this age.
- Avoid bottle “propping” or putting your child to bed with a bottle. This can lead to ear infections, choking, tooth problems, and other serious health concerns.

## About this Helping Hand

At each visit, your doctor will talk with you about your baby's development, growth, and safety so he or she grows up healthy. These handouts will help to remind you about the things your child's doctor will talk with you about at each visit. If you have any questions or concerns about your baby, please ask. We are here to help!

Other Helping Hands that may be useful:

*Bottle Feeding: Formula Preparation*, HH-IV-7

*Breast-feeding Your Baby*, HH-IV-69

*Child Passenger Safety*, HH-IV-14

*Calming a Fussy Baby*, HH-I-103

*SIDS Reduction (Safe Sleep Practices for Infants)*, HH-IV-69

*Home Safety for Infants and Toddlers*, HH-IV-73

*Temperature: Oral, Rectal and Axillary*, HH-II-27