

Well Child Care at 6 Months Old

Diet

- Do not start regular cow's milk until your baby is 1 year old.
- By now, your baby should have started rice cereal. If he/she had not started other foods, start now by introducing pureed fruits and vegetables. Be sure to separate new foods by one week. This will help you to identify which food your baby is reacting to if he/she develops a food allergy.
- Meats may be introduced around 8-9 months.
- Introduce a sippy cup with 1-2 oz of tap water a day.
- If your baby is exclusively breast fed or if you use water without fluoride (e.g. bottled water, some well water, some city water supplies), talk to your doctor about supplemental fluoride. Also, if your baby is not on formula, you should continue on over-the-counter multivitamin, such as Poly-vi-sol with Iron.
- Avoid eggs, wheat, seafood, and peanuts, which are more likely to cause allergic reactions.
- Avoid honey in the first year because it can contain harmful bacteria.
- Fruit juices are mostly sugar, and your child does not need them.
- To prevent choking, you should never feed your baby hard foods such as hot dogs, apples, grapes, or raw carrots. To find the nearest infant CPR class timing and locations call the Arlington chapter of the American Red Cross (703-527-3010, ext 736) or Virginia Hospital Center (703-558-2468). You may also sign up online at their websites.

Development

- Babies will squeal, babble, laugh and cry loudly. Listen and respond to your baby by imitating his/her sounds.
- Your baby may enjoy playing peek-a-boo. He/she may work for a toy that is out of reach and transfer toys from hand to hand.
- Your child will begin to understand "No." Babies may start to have temper tantrums. Use a new activity to distract your child while remaining calm and not reinforcing the behavior.
- Remember to read to your child.
- Establish a regular routine for bed, bath, and meals with a regular caregiver to allow your baby to get use to his/her surroundings and develop trust.
- Your baby may become shy with strangers.

Hygiene

- Do not put Q-tips in the infant ear canal. The outer ear may be cleaned with a Q-tip or washcloth.
- Begin brushing any baby teeth with warm water or baby toothpaste without fluoride.

Sleep

- Many 6 month olds are sleeping through the night. If your baby is not, ask your doctor for information on how to help him/her sleep.
- Every baby is different, but at this age, they typically take two naps a day, totaling 2 to 4 hours.
- Never prop a bottle or a give a bottle to your infant while he/she is in bed.

Teething

- Babies may begin to drool as they start teething.
- Some infants will be fussy for a few days before teeth erupt, but teething does not cause high fevers.
- Cold teething rings or cold, wet washcloths sometimes help to ease the pain.
- Before feeding, you may rub Anbesol or Orajel directly on your baby's gums. They usually provide infants about 15 minutes of relief. Tylenol can be used for pain on occasion as well.

Safety

- Every time you take your child in the car, he/she must be properly restrained in an infant car seat. You should use a rear facing car seat in the back seat of your car until your baby is older than 1 year and greater than 20 pounds. For more information, go to <http://www.aap.org/family/carseatguide.htm> or <http://.nhtsa.gov/> (search for "car seat").
- Use sunscreen when appropriate but it is best to keep your baby well covered when in the sun.
- Avoid walkers. They do not help babies walk and are associated with a higher rate of injury.
- Avoid holding your baby while cooking, smoking or drinking hot liquids to avoid burns.
- Reduce the temperature of your water heater to less than 120°F to avoid burns.
- As your baby becomes more mobile it is important to prevent falls by never leaving your infant unattended in areas off of which he/she could roll. Always put up crib and playpen side rails.
- Be sure to "baby proof" your house, especially as your child begins crawling. Block off stairs; remove breakable objects; pad sharp corners; tie up curtain/blind strings; keep plants, medicines/vitamins, and cleaning supplies out of reach; and cover up electrical outlets.
- Your baby will explore with his/her mouth. Be sure to keep small objects such as coins or safety pins out of reach. Use unbreakable toys without sharp edges or small parts that can come loose.
- If you have guns, make sure they are locked up and out of reach.
- Always be sure to have a functioning smoke detector.
- In case of a poisoning emergency call 1-800-222-1222.

Immunizations

- Your baby will receive his/her immunizations at his/her 6 month visit.
- Your baby may develop redness and pain for up to 48 hours at the injection site. He/she may also develop a fever.
- You may give ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) or acetaminophen (Tylenol); ask your doctor for the dose.
- Please call if your infant has any unusual symptoms, such as allergic reactions, high fever, weakness, crying for 3 hours, or if you have any concerns.

Illness

- Colds are common, especially if your baby is around other children. If your baby has cold symptoms, try nasal saline drops and bulb suctioning. Do not use any cold or cough medicine in a child this young.

Next Visit: Your baby's next routine visit will be at 9 months. There are no scheduled vaccines at this visit, but some babies need catch-up vaccines.