

Six Month Visit

NUTRITION

1. Continue to introduce one new food at a time. As your baby takes more solid foods, he will not need as much milk. Between 6 and 9 months your baby will transition from pureed foods to table foods.

a. Introduce other foods working towards a balanced diet. Introduce only one new food (not mixed foods) no more frequently than every 3-4 days. This way, if your baby has difficulty (rash, indigestion, etc.) with a specific food, it will be easy to tell which food is the culprit. Respect your baby's preferences about which foods they seem to like or dislike. In a playful and relaxed manner, offer your baby as much from the spoon as they seem interested in taking, up to about 5 tablespoons. There is no specific order to introduce foods. It is currently recommended to feed peanut butter as one of the early foods to help reduce allergy. You can dilute it in the cereal, or offer peanut butter puffs. Infant cereals are recommended for iron unless meat is fed daily, otherwise all foods may be mashed or table foods cut small. If they lose interest quickly or just are not in the mood at all, do not push it. For now, solid foods should be offered at conventional family meal times as a supplement to regular breast or formula feedings. Between six and twelve months the balance begins to shift and then a balanced diet of solid foods gradually become the main source of nutrition, with breast milk or formula as the supplement. So in the meantime, relax, follow your baby's lead – they are all different – and enjoy!

b. There are a few foods that should be avoided. Any food that does not soften rapidly in the mouth can cause CHOKING. Examples: hot dog, peanuts, popcorn, hard peas, corn, beets, raw carrot, celery sticks, raw apples, raisins and unpeeled grapes. The majority of childhood deaths from aspiration might be prevented if these foods were avoided during the first years of life. Consumption of raw honey should be avoided prior to one year of age; it has been associated with botulism, a potentially fatal nerve infection. Other than banana and avocados, fruits and vegetables should be cooked for easier digestion till about 9 months of age. Avoid giving foods with large amounts of added sugar and salt. You may start pick up foods when your child is sitting up well. Usually start with cereals, then soft foods cut into small pieces. By 9 months babies should be eating meals with the family such as macaroni & cheese, and spaghetti & meatballs, so it is not necessary to buy babyfood.

2. Try to set regular meal times. Poor eating habits (between meal snacking) develop early. Also try to make mealtime a family time. Include table foods from all food groups. It is a nice habit to get into and your baby will learn to self-feed over time by imitating you.

3. Introduce a cup. Your baby will spill at first but the goal is only to get them used to the idea of taking liquids from something other than a bottle. Bottle-baby cavities are a real problem. Do not place your baby in the crib with a bottle and do not use milk as a pacifier. Remember that juice is more a source of sugar than nutrition. Babies who regularly get a bottle on demand between meals generally do not eat as well at meals. They will learn to expect the bottle for crying and do not learn to settle themselves. By 9 months of age, your baby should have breakfast, lunch, and dinner well established with breast or bottle feeding happening more and more around meal time and less between meals. Also, by 9 months of age, the diet should be well balanced with each of the four major food groups represented regularly over the course of each week. This gives you three months to gradually watch solid foods increase in quantity and variety as breast milk or formula volume naturally decreases and becomes part of a well-balanced diet, no longer the sole source of nutrition.

4. Feeding should never be forced. Mealtimes should be pleasant and interactive. The more you can follow your baby's initiative, the better.

SEPARATION ANXIETY

Over the next 6 months, your baby may demonstrate more signs of "stranger awareness". They may cry when company comes over or suddenly not love to be held by just anybody the way they used to. Anxiety when separating from parents is normal at this age. You may find it difficult to leave the room even briefly. Play peek-a-boo to help them develop a sense of "object permanence" (just because it is gone does not mean it ceases to exist). Call to them from another room so that they know you are there even though they cannot see you. Separation from parents at bedtime and awakening at night (with no trace of you!) can become more distressing to babies at this age. Help your baby through this important phase by establishing a bedtime ritual. Provide a favorite toy as a "transitional object" which can give security in the absence of parents. It is not unusual to awaken at night at this age.

If you have waited and are sure that they will not settle themselves back to sleep, then you should always respond to let them know that you still exist, but interact minimally so that you do not encourage a night waking habit.

Separation anxiety is not overcome by avoiding separation. Children learn to accept parents' departure if there is predictability to their return and if parents do not communicate their own anxiety to the child.

TEETHING

There is a wide variability between children regarding the eruption time of first teeth. To relieve the discomfort associated with teething, give acetaminophen and provide cold, hard objects to bite down upon. The many drug store teething remedies that are applied directly to inflamed gums do not work and can be dangerous. It is true that many children have other symptoms such as runny nose and mild fever with teething. However, temperatures greater than 101 degrees and more significant symptoms probably represent an infectious illness and are not easily attributable to teething alone. When wiping your child's face after meals, go over the teeth, too.

SAFETY

1. Car safety seat every ride! If your child is over 20 lbs. you will need a seat that is approved above 20 lbs. facing backwards. For information on the latest recommendations and considerations, please visit healthychildren.org and search for "Car Seat Safety".
2. Your baby is getting around more and more each week. Safety check your house. Use gates at your steps, but not the accordion style ones which can collapse around arms and legs. Never leave your baby unattended on a bed, in a bath, or near a pool. Use plastic electrical outlet plugs and electrical tape at all extension cord junctions. Avoid using appliances with dangling electrical cords. All medicines, cleaning supplies and plants (many are poisonous) should be kept out of reach. Lock doors to dangerous areas like the garage and basement.
3. We discourage the use of walkers because of poor safety and motor development inhibition.
4. Introducing your baby to water for brief play can be fun. Prolonged play and any submersion can be dangerous.
5. Limiting sun exposure and using sun screen will help prevent sun damage.

PREVENTION OF CHOKING

Approximately 3,000 deaths occur in the United States annually due to inhaled objects, making this the most common cause of accidental death in children less than one year of age.

1. Small parts on toys for children under three years of age, by government regulation, must be larger than 1.25 inches in diameter. This is approximately the diameter of a toilet paper roll. However, toys of older siblings which do not meet these standards pose a danger to younger siblings. Use only unbreakable toys without sharp edges or small parts that can come loose.
2. Food should be cut or broken into small bite-size pieces. Children should be encouraged to chew thoroughly. Conversation, playing, running, and other activities that can precipitate aspiration should be discouraged during eating. Get your child into the habit of sitting in the high chair while eating and only eating in the kitchen without the TV on.
3. Children should be taught not to hold foreign objects in their mouths.
4. Small children should not be given coins or small objects for play, or as reward items.
5. Hard, smooth vegetable type foods, such as peanuts, or foods containing nuts that require a grinding motion should not be given to young children. This chewing motion is not well established until age four. Also avoid hot dogs, whole grapes, raisins, popcorn and hard candies. Chewable pills for children should be given only after age three.

6. Uninflated balloons can be sucked down into the throat and should be kept away from children.
7. Consider an infant/child CPR and choking class.