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6 Months

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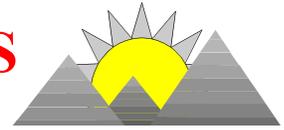
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GREAT BEGINNINGS

A Series for Parents of Young Children



6 MONTHS

Dear Parents,

Six months old! Can you believe all the progress Baby has made. I hope you've had a chance to go through your house with a fine-toothed comb in order to get it baby-proofed. If you missed anything, you can be sure Baby will find it—especially plants (dirt surely does attract her) and the bits and pieces left on the carpet. She is probably having a great time tasting everything in the house.

One reason for all this tasting, and perhaps the extra drooling, is that she may be beginning to teeth. Some babies have a hard time getting teeth, while others don't even let you know it's happening. If your baby is extra fussy at teething time, you may find that a chilled gel teething ring will bring relief to those sore gums.

Wheelies in the Infant Seat

Another of your child's tricks may be to lean forward in the infant seat. In fact, if your child isn't content to lie back anymore, it may be a safety problem. Watch out for this trick. It may be time to think about obtaining a high chair.

Fathers, Talking Is a Way of Being Close to Your Baby!

You don't have to feel funny talking to your baby because she can't talk back yet, or because you feel others are watching and judging you. When you answer your baby's babbling with words or noises that imitate her sounds, you are teaching your baby that sounds are one way we communicate with each other. It is a very important part of learning.

Babies who are spoken to often also learn to speak more easily. This is because they imitate the sounds and facial expressions of those who are talking to

them. The more they are spoken to, the more practice they get. Notice how your baby watches your face as you talk to her.

So, the next time you find yourself feeling self-conscious, try to remember that your baby is learning from you. Communicating with others is one of the most important things we do. Help your baby with this skill!

What's It Like to Be 6 Months Old?

How I Grow

- I turn and twist in all directions.
- I roll from my back to my stomach.
- I sometimes sit up for as long as half an hour.
- I creep backwards and forwards with my stomach on the floor.
- I hold onto an object with one hand and then put it in the other hand.

- I hold one building block, reach for a second one, and look for a third one right away.
- I grab for an object when it drops.

How I Talk

- I make sounds like, f, v, th, s, sh, sz, m, and n.
- I still babble a lot, but I have more control of sounds.
- I'm beginning to understand some words by the tone of voice you use.

How I Respond

- I pick up things, shake them, and then listen to the sound they make when I drop them.
- I play games with people I know.
- I get upset when I'm around grown-up strangers, but I'm friendly to children I don't know.
- I coo, hum, or stop crying sometimes when I hear music.
- I keep very busy doing something all the time.

How I Understand

- I know that I have to use my hands to pick up something.
- I look at and study things for a long time.
- I turn objects upside down just to get another view of them.
- I turn when I hear my name.

How I Feel

- I haven't learned how to control my feelings yet.
- I complain and howl when I don't get my way.
- I giggle, coo, and squeal with joy when I'm happy.
- I have very strong likes and dislikes about food.

Back to the Doctor

It's time for the baby's third DPT and Hib meningitis vaccine. If your baby becomes upset by these visits, try to schedule them when you're not in a rush to be anywhere afterward. Then you can spend a quiet and relaxed time that just may cheer her up.

Saying "I love You" without Words

Sometimes we have a hard time *talking* with babies because they can't talk back, and we've forgotten how to communicate without words. So here are some tips on how to tell your baby "I love you" without words: Touch can give the most important love messages! Hold your baby in a gentle, secure way, giving tender caresses and affectionate hugs. Tell your baby "I love you" by letting your body express all the love that you feel. (Tense, jerky, abrupt handling gives the opposite message.)

Use your **eyes** to send a love message. Look at Baby eye-to-eye and smile. (If your face is tense and unsmiling, you communicate unpleasant feelings to your child.)

Hum, whistle, or sing to your baby. If your voice is low, gentle, soothing, and full of joy and excitement, your baby is bound to feel your love.

Rock your baby. Find an old-fashioned rocker and use it while you're giving love messages.

Games Babies Play

Get-What-You-Want: A Using-a-Tool Game

Purpose of game: Encourage your baby to use objects as tools for getting what he wants.

How to play:

- Put your baby in a sitting position on the floor. (You can sit beside or in front of him.)
- Place a small blanket within his reach.
- Put a favorite toy on the blanket, but place it out of reach.
- If your baby does not pull the blanket to get the toy, push the blanket towards him until he can reach the toy.
- Use action words to describe what he is doing, like "See, you got the ball by pulling the blanket."
- You can use towels, potholders, or pillows instead of a blanket.

Play Time

Try to give Baby the opportunity to practice all her new skills. It is even more fun for her when you either help her practice or play with her while she participates.

Put some toys just a bit out of her reach and see if she tries to get them. If she gets frustrated, show her how to reach them. Give her two toys—one for each hand—and then offer a third. What does she do?

Give her a pan and a spoon. Nearly every baby will find those two items an irresistible combination. Hope you don't mind the enthusiastic banging!

When she's able to sit up pretty well, she'll probably love it when you bring her down on the floor to play and be involved in a whole-family playtime.

Suction Toys

One toy that you and your baby will especially like with the new highchair is a suction toy. There are many on the market that make all sorts of noises. The advantage of this wonderful toy is that it sticks to the tray of the highchair. That means you may be able to keep baby busy and happy and you won't have to constantly pick the toys up off the floor.

Other Toy Favorites of 6-Month Olds

Toys that roll, or those that can be pushed or pulled are often enjoyed by this age group. Balls that make noise as they roll are usually big favorites. Plastic measuring spoons are a handy toy that most teething babies adore.

Safety Tip

Burns. Do not handle hot liquids when children are nearby. Scalds result from spilled hot food and drink; scalding accidents can be decreased by such measures as avoiding use of tablecloths and keeping cups and saucer from the edge of tables.

Feeding Your Baby

Your baby is probably eager to learn how to feed herself. She may be messy at first, but she'll improve with practice.

Encourage your baby to feed herself. Use *finger foods* such as crackers and small pieces of bread or toast. Let Baby help you handle the spoon. Sit behind her so she can hold the spoon, or your hand, and can learn movements to use later when she feeds herself.

Also let your baby try drinking small amounts of formula or fruit juice from a cup. When she becomes skillful at drinking, increase the amount.

Your baby will be messy when she is first learning how to feed herself. Try not to be too concerned about neatness now. Be prepared with a bib or apron to protect her clothing. A large plastic drop-cloth under Baby's chair will make cleanup easier.

Questions

Q: “My baby wakes up almost every night and cries until I go to him. Then he wants to play instead of sleep! What can I do?”

A: Some babies have a hard time sleeping at night. They spend the entire day exploring and playing, and then at night, even though they are exhausted, they have trouble settling down. They wake up during the night and want to play, or practice their new skill of standing up in bed.

Parents have to gently but firmly let their babies know that it is bedtime, not playtime. When your baby wakes up in the night, go to him. Pick him up, cuddle him, talk to him, change his diaper, and then put him down on his tummy to sleep. Tell him firmly that he must try to go to sleep.

You can also try spending some quiet time with him before bedtime. Read from a favorite book, play a quiet game together, or hold him closely and sing to him before putting him down for the night.

Q: Everything goes into my baby's mouth. He loves to play with magazines and newspapers. Is it harmful to chew newspapers? Is the ink and coloring dangerous? Should I try to stop the habit?

A: There are some toxic chemicals and a very small amount of lead in the brightly-printed ads in newspapers and magazines. Too much of this lead, combined with dust on the floor and in the air, could cause the first phases of lead poisoning. So, since there are so many things that are safer to chew, perhaps it would be a good idea to keep magazines and newspapers out of your baby's reach for awhile.

Almost anything in your house can be poisonous to your child. He will put everything into his mouth, even if it doesn't taste good. Be sure to keep all household products and medicines up, up and away, completely out of his sight and reach. Never store lye drain cleaners in your home. Use safety latches on drawers and cupboards. He won't understand or remember "NO."

If he does put something poisonous into his mouth, call your physician or the Poison Center immediately. Have Syrup of Ipecac on hand to make him vomit, but use it only if directed to do so.

Parenting Breaks

Parenting is one of the busiest jobs in the world. You're apt to like parenting a lot better if you plan little *getaways* every couple of weeks. Stay involved in the things that make life fun for you!

What Are Important Parenting Skills?

For many years, the Harvard Preschool Project has been studying the behavior differences between well-developed and poorly-developed children. They report that differences are related to the way parents handle their children and organize their lives.

Parents of well-developed children are less restrictive, good at judging what their children want,

and also able to say "NO" when their children make unreasonable demands. These parents understand their child's needs and encourage development in three major ways:

- They safety-proof their home so their child can explore the surroundings and use his natural curiosity.
- They act as consultants as their child explores his new world...gets excited, hurt or frustrated...wants attention.
- These parents try to identify the source of their child's feelings and teach how to cope with the causes of these feelings. These little one-minute teaching and learning exchanges may happen dozens of times each day.
- They set firm limits and are consistent in their discipline.

Child Care: Profit or Non-Profit Center?

Will you get better quality child care if it is for profit or not for profit? A study of child care in Connecticut (Kagan, S.L. & Newton, J.W. November, 1989; For-profit and nonprofit child care: Similarities and differences. **Young Children** 45, 4-10) gives these clues:

Good and poor quality care can be found in all types of centers.

The highest quality centers tended to be government subsidized non-profits. Although the enrollment in these centers is often limited to low-income children, the researchers suggested that children from middle and upper income families should be able to attend government subsidized centers on a sliding scale, fee-for-service basis.

Nonprofit centers tended to have better ratings on these areas linked to quality:

1. Ratio of children to care-givers.
2. Services offered to children and their families (screening and referrals for vision, hearing, social work, psychological care). Also included were field trips and access to library books.

Nonprofit centers tended to have more child-sensitive environments and more materials that encouraged creativity. Care-givers in non-profit centers seemed to offer more encouragement to children.

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