



Children & Teens MEDICAL CENTER

SIX MONTHS



Normal Development

The period between 6 and 12 months of age is one of tremendous changes. By one year, most babies have learned to sit, creep or crawl, cruise holding onto furniture, and may even walk alone. Some are saying several words, and most have some teeth. The most important thing to remember is that there is a big variety in the times infants do these things. Your child may or may not say “Mama”, “Dada”, or cut teeth, sit or walk at the same age as your friends’ baby or your other children did. This does not mean that he is smarter or dumber – just that he is himself. Each child has his own personal pattern of growth. The first step in helping your baby develop normally is to understand and accept his or her individual style.

At 6 months most babies are able to roll over, and able to sit tripod style (with some support).

At about 5 to 9 months of age your baby may go through what is called “stranger anxiety”. He may reject all strangers, and even people that he normally sees, including his own father. He clings to his mother and all he wants is her. He is not being unfriendly. This is normal development, and it will pass.

At about 9 to 10 months of age, infants go through “separation anxiety”. They are not happy unless they can see their mother in the same room, and will follow her about, if possible. There may also be some difficulty at this time with putting the baby to sleep, or waking in the night. The infant has to learn that when mother is out of sight she is still there. You can talk to your baby from another room to comfort her. Peek-a-boo is a good game at this time, as the baby is learning that things can disappear and come back. Continue to put your baby to bed while drowsy, not asleep. Also, this is an appropriate age to wean nighttime feedings. Provide colorful toys to stimulate your baby. Keep reading stories and singing to your baby. She thrives on this interaction.



Safety

Keeping your baby safe is more difficult now that he has become a curious explorer with a mind of his own. He still needs protection as well as freedom to explore for his own development. His mobility greatly increases the problems he can get into. He has learned to pull himself up, and everything else down. He will investigate everything and has no way of knowing what can happen. He explores the world with taste and touch.

It is a good idea to crawl around your home (and anywhere else your child visits) to see what is down there. We will give you poison control information. Keep the poison control number (1-800-942-5969 – Rush Poison Control Center) by your telephone. They will tell you what to do and if Syrup of Ipecac should be given. For insurance purposes, it is important to call our office either before or en-route to the hospital. Contact our office immediately if this occurs. We do not recommend baby walkers – they can tip over or fall down stairs. Avoid sun exposure, but if your baby will be in the sun, sunscreen is OK to use at this age. Reapply every 2 hours for extra protection. Remember not to prop the bottle while feeding. Never shake a baby.



Diet

We advise you to keep baby on breast milk or formula with iron until one year of age. In this way, you can be sure that he will get enough basic nutrients. Also, studies have shown that the protein in whole cow's milk is hard to digest, and can cause small amounts of bleeding in the stomachs of some infants, making them anemic.

Teach your child to take food from a spoon and drink from a cup. If your baby switches to a cup in the first year to 15 months, you will avoid a struggle over the bottle later on. Do it gradually and do not rush it. Do not put your baby to bed with bottle because the milk or juice can cause cavities in the teeth, and drinking from a bottle while laying flat can promote ear infections in some babies.

Start feeding solids with cereal. Dry cereal contains more iron and is better to start with, especially for breastfed babies, because the added iron will help prevent anemia. Add solids gradually (cereals, fruits, vegetables, meats). Add one new food every 3-7 days. In this way, if your baby has reaction (vomiting, diarrhea, or a rash) you will be able to tell which food it is. It may be an allergy to the new food. Stop feeding your baby that food and see if the problem goes away. Do not force eating solids. It takes time to get used to new foods and new textures. Foods that commonly cause reactions include citrus, tomato, chocolate, peanut butter, fish, egg white, and wheat, and should not be introduced until your baby is one year of age.

Your baby is going to want to feed herself. Encourage her, and expect it to be messy as she learns to eat. Give her finger foods (crackers, toast, banana pieces, dry cereals, chopped meats). A big piece of plastic under and around the eating area may make it easier for you.

At about 10 months to 1 year of age, your baby's appetite will decrease and he won't want to eat as much. This is normal development. His rate of growth has slowed down and he needs less food.

Teething

Your baby has probably been drooling in the last three months of age, when the salivary glands started working. The first tooth usually appears between 5 and 9 months of age, but may take longer. The baby may be irritable and lose his appetite. You can try a teething ring – one filled with water and kept in the refrigerator is good because cold is an anesthetic. Massaging the gums is soothing, and helps the teeth push through. If fever or vomiting occurs, the infant is sick as well as teething. Consult your emergency symptoms handout or call us if you are concerned.

Immunizations

Your baby will receive a DTAP vaccine at this visit. We want to know if she has any problems with this 3rd set of immunizations. Your baby's next check-up is at 9 months of age.

Child Behavior/Parent Behavior

As your baby becomes older and more skillful, you will have to limit his freedom in order to prevent accidents and total destruction. It is important to put some thought into how you are going to do this. The child will learn whatever method you use to control your child's behavior. If you find it very annoying to hear toddlers say "NO!" to everything that is suggested, you would be better off not using this word 500 times a day yourself. Many parents are horrified to see their one-year-old slapping other children, pets, or themselves. If you hit in order to take control of a situation, your child is going to pick up this method directly from you. They are trying to imitate whatever you do. The most effective way to bring about desired behavior is to let your baby know how pleased you are. They need your continued physical presence, touch, and praise to encourage them to continue "being good". The most effective way to end unacceptable behaviors is to ignore them completely. When this is not possible (because the behavior is dangerous or destructive), pick him up and move him. A restrictive space such as a playpen may be needed as a last resort (not in the child's bed). Remember that a minute is a long time to a baby: lengthy restriction will prevent normal learning opportunities.