

Allentown

Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine



Caring for Your Growing Baby 6-12 Months

This is a period of great change and fun. Your infant will become increasingly mobile, and by the end of this period may be walking independently. Language and social skills will also develop rapidly. Your infant is gaining physical independence, but is still dependent and sweet, and not yet challenging your patience and authority. You and your child are beginning another wonderful stage in your life together!

As your child approaches one year of age, we want to congratulate you on your child's First Birthday! Don't forget to celebrate all the incredible accomplishments of the last twelve months!

Growth and Development

During this six month period your child will master sitting unsupported, rolling over both ways, creeping or crawling on her hands and knees, and pulling up to a standing position. Some children will be cruising, walking while holding on to furniture, a laundry basket, or buggy, and some will be walking independently!

Your child will enjoy playing with toys, transferring objects from one hand to the other, throwing them for you to retrieve, and later, holding a toy in each hand to bang together or present to you. As your child approaches 12 months, he will delight in nesting and stacking toys, taking things in and out of containers. Peek-a-boo and patty cake are favorite games, and he will take pleasure in waving good-bye. Your child will master the pincer grasp, using his thumb and index finger to pick up tiny objects. Picking up lint and chasing cheerios around on the high chair tray will be enjoyable activities. He may also be able to turn pages of a book and scribble.

The babbling sounds will become more complex and start to mimic the intonations of speech. Your child will start to imitate words, use exclamations, and use gestures to communicate. The mama and dada which previously had no meaning, will be used specifically to mean, you. Your baby may have a few words by the end of this period and be able to communicate wants by pointing or leading you to the wanted object.

Your child's understanding of spoken language is also developing rapidly. She will respond to her name, understand your expression of danger or disapproval, listen attentively to conversations around her, and be able to respond to simple spoken requests.

What is equally remarkable during this period is your baby's increasing awareness and understanding of the world around him. Your child understands object permanence and is no longer satisfied with "out of sight, out of mind". He is discovering cause and effect, how things work. Your child may experience stranger anxiety, and be

hesitant or fearful around people not familiar to him. He may be able to look at or point to named objects in a book, imitate your actions and activities around the house. Your child understands your tone of voice and is starting to test your reaction to his actions.

Please remember that every child is unique and develops at his or her own pace. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your child's development, it is very important to let your physician know.

Enjoying your baby

As you can see, these six months are a whirlwind of change and a wondrous time of growth and learning. To be able to enjoy this time with your child, your first task is to make your baby's environment safe, to encourage curiosity and exploration.

Good parenting and discipline at this age means providing a safe environment for your baby to explore, so you do not have to be constantly saying "no". Make it possible for your child to be as inquisitive as possible. Remove the breakables within your child's reach, move the low furniture with sharp corners out of the way. Table clothes or electric cords that might be yanked on or put in the mouth must be out of reach. Electrical outlets must be covered with safety plugs. The list goes on and on; get down on your hands and knees to check your child's play area from his viewpoint and anticipate safety hazards.

Now that your child has the freedom of a safe environment in which to play, you can let her explore without constant worry. But, remember that your baby still needs constant supervision, and your untiring patience and self-control. Your child is already imitating your words and actions. Always model the good manners, speech and behavior that you want your child to develop.

Unbreakable mirrors, balls, musical toys, squeeze toys, stacking toys in different shapes, colors and sizes, containers -especially nesting ones, large building blocks, activity toys, push-pull toys, toy telephones, cardboard books...are all great toys for this age. You do not have to invest in many store bought toys - wooden spoons, plastic containers, egg cartons will probably be the favorite objects.

Get down on the floor and play with your baby, demonstrate the use of a toy. Roll a ball back and forth. Continue to read, talk, and sing to your baby. Point to and name objects in books. Play games - so big, peek-a-boo, hide and seek, patty cake. Your baby will enjoy listening to music and dancing, rocking or moving to the music.

Be creative, **turn off the TV**, and have fun! Don't forget a steady diet of hugs, kisses, cuddling, and unending praises and delight for new accomplishments.

Feeding

Between 6 to 12 months of age your baby will continue to nurse or drink iron-fortified formula. Cow's milk should not be introduced before one year of age. Some breast fed infants may become less interested in nursing and wean themselves from the breast. Others will continue to nurse with enthusiasm. You may notice that the amount of milk consumed will decrease as the intake of solid foods increases. Your baby should not drink a bottle unattended. He still needs to be held and loved during bottle feedings.

During this period your baby will master spoon feedings of iron-fortified infant cereal, fruits and vegetables. Your baby will start with smooth, strained foods and transition to lumpier, thicker foods which he gums, then pieces of soft food, finger foods, table foods as he develops the ability to munch and chew. By the end of this period, your baby will be eating mostly table foods and the diet will consist of grains, fruits, vegetables, and proteins. Added sugar and salt should be avoided, to help develop life long good eating habits. Food must be selected and prepared to avoid choking.

Independent feeding must be encouraged; be ready for the mess. This is a good time to introduce and encourage the use of a cup. The amount of juice should be limited to 4-8 ounces per day, and should not be a substitute for breast milk or formula. Your baby will be eating 3 or more meals a day of solid foods.

This is the time to establish good eating habits. Your child should be in a high chair with the safety belt securely

fastened. Your child should never be left unattended when eating. Meal times should be calm. Let your baby set the pace and the amount of food consumed. Your baby knows **how much to eat**. Remember that no two babies are alike. Intake, likes and dislikes may vary from day to day. It is not too early to make dinnertime a special time for the family to be together.

Remember: Avoid peanut butter, popcorn, nuts, hard candies, hot dogs, raisins and whole grapes, as these foods are choking hazards. Honey should also be avoided during the first year of life because of the risk of infant botulism.

Sleeping

If your baby is not sleeping through the night, this is the time to examine your bedtime and sleep routine. Suggestions for helping your baby sleep through the night:

- Your baby should be put to bed in his or her crib
- Put your baby to bed when tired or drowsy, but not fully asleep
- Limit daytime naps
- Encourage your baby to take a favorite cuddly toy or blanket to bed
- Try to adhere to a consistent bed-time routine

Do not let your infant fall asleep sucking a bottle. Not only will you train him to look for the bottle to return to sleep during the normal night awakenings, but it is also a choking hazard and will cause cavities.

Safety

Please take the time to carefully read the enclosed injury prevention sheet. Accidents are a common and preventable cause of serious injury and death in small children.

In addition to the safety guidelines outlined, please be aware of firearm hazards. **It is best to keep all guns out of the home. If you choose to keep a gun in the home, all firearms must be kept unloaded and locked up. Ammunition should be stored and locked up separately.**

Suggested Reading

American Academy of Pediatrics:

[Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5](#)

[Guide to Your Child's Symptoms](#)

[Guide to Your Child's Nutrition](#)

[Guide to Your Child's Sleep](#)

Websites

www.aap.org American Academy of Pediatrics

www.familydoctor.org American Academy of Family Physicians

www.cdc.gov Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



How Your Baby Learns to Eat Solid Foods (6 to 12 months)



- Go by what your baby can do, not how old he is.
- Learning to eat solid foods takes practice.
- The food you give your baby teaches him to eat.
- He has to learn to get mushy food from a spoon—and swallow it.
- Later he learns to gum thick, lumpy food.
- Finally, he can pick up and chew soft, cooked food.
- Let him move along at his own rate.
- Be prepared for him to keep changing.
- Remember that you are important to your baby.

There's no set timetable for your baby to follow when he's learning to eat solids. Let him move along at his own rate. The ages listed here are just averages when he might be ready. Pay attention to what your child does with the food, rather than to how old he is.

Learning to use a spoon

As he approaches 6 months of age, your baby is going to show signs that he's ready for a change in the way he eats. He'll sit up, open his mouth when he sees food approaching, close his mouth over the spoon, scrape the food from the spoon with his lips, and move the food from the front to the back of his tongue so that he can swallow it. [For more about how to begin solids, ask for the handout **STARTING YOUR BABY ON SOLID FOODS**].

Getting used to flavors and textures

Once he gets used to eating from a spoon, the next step is for your baby to get used to a variety of flavors and textures. Start offering him foods that are fork-mashed or put through a baby food grinder. Foods with more texture make him move his tongue from one side to the other and help him learn to control where food goes in his mouth. He figures out how to keep from swallowing as he uses his tongue to push the food between his jaws to munch it with an up-and-down motion until it's mushy enough to swallow.

Your baby still depends mostly on breastmilk or formula as his main source of nutrients and calories, so you don't need to worry about how much he eats [see **HOW MUCH SHOULD YOUR BABY EAT?**]. The point

is to get him acquainted with new tastes and textures.

Munching and chewing and finger feeding

Between 7 and 10 months of age, your child begins to be able to eat pieces of soft food, like a cooked carrot or a banana. He learns to judge the size of bite he takes, and gets better at chewing by grinding with his jaws rather than munching. He still lets food slip back in his throat before he chews it, so he gags at times. He has probably cut some front teeth that he uses to help bite. But he doesn't have molars and he gets along very well without them.

To learn about food, children need to feel, squish, and spoon foods, to put them in their mouths and take them out again. Give your baby a blunt little baby spoon, and let him join in.

At this time, your child also develops a pincer grasp, using his thumb and fingers to pinch small pieces. He delights in this skill, because it lets him pick up small finger foods like crackers and ready-to-eat breakfast cereal. He can feed himself!

Everything goes in his mouth at this stage, so make sure the small pieces are soft things he can eat.

Joining in at the family table

Toward the end of the first year, your child starts to get very interested in what goes on at the family table. When he demands to join in, you know he's ready to make the last feeding transition to table food. He's enthusiastic about the change—but not very neat.

He wants to feed himself and he can only do it with his fingers. Finger foods can be little pieces of table food, or anything else that hangs together enough to get it from high chair tray to mouth, like mashed potatoes or cut-up noodles. Prepare for a mess. The mess is an important part of learning to eat.

The nutritional value of the solids your child eats becomes important now. As he fills up on table food and milk from a cup, he drops his breastfeedings or bottle-feedings one by one. When he's a year old and he's well-established on table food, he can shift from his infant milk feeding to whole pasteurized milk [see **WEANING YOUR BABY**].

Choose the right foods for your baby

For more about what to feed your baby, ask for the handout **SELECTING SOLID FOODS FOR YOUR BABY**.

Your baby will gag

When your child is learning to chew and swallow, he won't be very good at controlling where food goes in his mouth. Some food slips to the back of his tongue—before he's ready to swallow—and makes him gag, sending the food right back out again. Don't worry. Gagging is a natural defense against choking.

As your baby matures and gains experience with eating, he'll gag less. Mouthing his hands and toys also helps tone down his gag reflex. If your baby continues to gag a lot and doesn't want anything in his mouth, you should bring it to the attention of your health care provider.

Be careful about choking

Sometimes a child loses control of the food in his mouth and it slips down his throat without being chewed, too far down for him to gag it out. If he takes a breath at the same time, the food can lodge over the entrance of his windpipe and block off his air supply. Young children have an increased risk of choking, simply because they aren't as good at chewing and swallowing.

You can keep your child from choking by choosing food carefully and supervising while your child eats. Avoid round slippery food like grapes and slices of hot dogs and rounds of carrots. Avoid large pieces of food and small hard foods, like nuts and raw vegetables. Avoid peanut butter and popcorn. Make sure your child sits up straight to eat. Supervise at all times during feeding, and keep feeding times calm and quiet. Have your health care provider teach you first aid for choking.

Learning cup-drinking

After your baby gets used to eating from a spoon, it's a good idea to introduce sips of formula or juice from a cup. A regular cup is fine; an infant cup is also okay. Don't get started using a bottle for juice—that will hook your baby all the more on the bottle. When it's time for solid foods, it's also time to start working toward weaning, not toward reinforcing the use of the bottle.

At first, cup-drinking is messy business, with most of the liquid drooling out of the corners of your baby's mouth. After a while, his mouth develops so he can curve his lips around the edge of the cup, and drink with less spilling.

Babies occasionally prefer to drink their meal, insisting on more and more formula and showing

little interest in solid foods. Your baby needs to learn to eat solid foods now or he could get stuck on formula. For a while, you might have to put a limit on how much formula you offer him. Three to four cups of formula a day is enough at this age.

You are still important

From 6 to 12 months of age, your child begins to want to do things for himself. He starts to take more interest in people and in things other than you. It may even seem like you aren't as important as you once were. Not true. Your presence while he eats continues to be very important. He will always do more and dare more with his eating when you are there. However, at times he'll be so interested in what's going on around him that he may want you to feed him while he looks around or plays. Don't do the job for him. Expect him to be an active participant in feeding. Even at this early age, he needs to take responsibility for his eating.

Feelings are important

Don't be afraid of your child's feelings, and don't feed your child to try to settle him down. At this age, he's beginning to express pleasure, excitement, protest, rage, aggressiveness, dependency, and affection. He can express these feelings and still be able to calm down. It's at this stage that he's sorting out emotions from the sensations of hunger, appetite, and fullness. You need to help with the sorting by not feeding him whenever he gets upset. Children who are offered food whenever they feel upset don't learn to feel their feelings and may eat instead. They can also get turned off by food.

What lies ahead?

After the first year, your child will get better at chewing, drinking from a cup, and using a spoon and fork. For now, he'll be messy but interested in his food and pretty accepting of a variety of foods. You can look forward to more of a regular routine as you include him in your family eating pattern. You even get a little breather before your beginning toddler starts to develop the more limited appetite and contrariness of that age group (see **HOW TO FEED YOUR TODDLER**).

Respecting your child's wishes about food now will pay off when he gets to be a toddler and you'll need to set limits. Babies learn to give back what they get. If you've supported your child's eating, and tried to be sensitive and responsive to his desires, he's more likely to try to go along with your wishes later.

Elyse Sater, author of *Child of Mine: Feeding with Love and Good Sense*. Ball Publishing, Palo Alto, CA

ALLENTOWN PEDIATRIC & ADOLESCENT MEDICINE
SAFETY CONCERNS
6 - 12 MONTHS

Hundreds of children younger than 1 year die every year in the United States. Most of these deaths are preventable. Safety concerns are of utmost importance as your child begins to roll over, sit, stand, crawl and walk. This is the time to baby proof your house to make it safe for your quick and inquisitive child!

FALLS

Use gates on stairways and doors and install window guards on all windows above the first floor.

Remove furniture with sharp corners in the rooms where your child plays.

Remove dangling cords, wires, tablecloths, potted plants that are within reach of an infant or toddler.

Do not use a baby walker. Your child will tip it over, fall out of it, or fall down the stairs in it. Baby walkers allow children to get to places where they can pull hot foods or heavy objects down on themselves.

If your child has a serious fall or does not act normally after a fall, call your doctor or 911.

BURNS

Never leave cups of hot beverages on tables or carry hot liquids or food while holding your child.

Never allow your child to crawl or walk around stoves, ovens, wall or floor heaters, or other hot appliances. A safe place for child if you are unable to give your full attention to him is a playpen, crib, or high chair.

Never leave a hot iron or curling/straightening iron within reach of a child.

To prevent hot water scalding, be certain your hot water is not set above 120°.

If your child does get burned, put cold water on the burned area immediately. Then cover the burned area loosely with a bandage or clean cloth and call your doctor.

FIRE SAFETY

Smoke alarms are necessary near the bedrooms and on each floor. Test the batteries monthly and replace every year. Carbon monoxide detectors are important as well. Have a working fire extinguisher and plan for escape.

DROWNING

Never leave your child alone in or near a bathtub, pail of water, wading or swimming pool, or any other water, even for a moment. Empty all the water from a bathtub, pail, or any container of water immediately after use. Keep the door to the bathroom closed. Drowning can occur in less than two inches of water.

POISONING AND CHOKING

Small objects and balloons are choking hazards. Do not feed your child foods like carrots, hot dogs, grapes, peanuts, popcorn or raisins that are easily choked on.

Be prepared to administer first aid to a choking child.

Keep medicines, household cleaning products, chemicals completely out of sight and reach of your child. Use safety latches or locks on drawers and cupboards.

If your child swallows something that could be poisonous, call the Poison Control Center of WNY at 878-7654 or Toll Free at 1-800-222-1222 immediately. Do not make your child vomit.

STRANGULATION AND SUFFOCATION

Place your baby's crib away from windows. Cords from window blinds and draperies can strangle your child. Tie cords high and out of reach. Do not knot cords together.

CAR SAFETY

An infant must always ride in a rear-facing car seat in the back seat until he or she is at least one year of age *and* at least 20 pounds. A rear-facing car seat should never be placed in front of a passenger air bag. The safest place for all children is the back seat.

Do not leave your child alone in a car. Keep vehicles and their trunks locked. Death from excess heat may occur in a closed car in warm weather in a short time.