

6 Month Newsletter



Well Child appointments can be made online at ARCpediatrics.com.

Your baby's length, weight, head size, along with health screens and immunizations performed will be in the *After Visit Summary*.

Click on the Visit icon in MyChart to see the After Visit Summary related to this visit.



Quick Tips for Parents

- You can start offering your baby many types of foods. The only things that you need to continue to avoid are hard foods and honey.
- Your baby can now have up to 8 ounces of water per day. This is a good time to introduce a cup to practice drinking from a sippy, straw, or 360 lid cup.
- It's time to think about what you can do to make your home more safe for your baby who is able to move, reach, and grab.
- Track your baby's developmental milestones on the CDC Milestone Tracker app. You can find great tips on improving your child's development and practicing their next developmental skill.

NUTRITION

Breast-feeding

As your baby's solid food intake increases, the number and duration of breast-feedings will decrease.

Formula-feeding

At this age, depending on whether solids have been started, most infants take 26–36 ounces of formula a day. By 9 months the average amount of formula a day is 24 ounces. We do not recommend giving your baby cow's milk until after 12 months of age.

Cup Training

Cup training should start by 6 months of age. We recommend introducing water by giving your baby a sippy or straw cup or a 360 lid cup. Practicing using a cup will help to develop oral motor skills and to transition away from bottles by 12 months of age.

Water and Juices

Once your baby is taking a significant amount of solids, the need for extra fluids increases. Offer water between meals when your baby seems thirsty, up to a maximum of 8 ounces per day. Juices are not recommended as they contain a large amount of sugar, although sometimes juices are used to help with constipation. If you give your baby juice, only offer your child 100% juice and limit the amount to 4 ounces a day. Excessive juice intake can cause gas, diarrhea, and tooth decay.

Solid Foods

Continue to practice “responsive feeding” with your baby. Respond to your baby's cues of hunger and fullness. An infant shows hunger by moving their head forward to the spoon and swiping the food toward their mouth with their hands. Signs your baby may show that they are full include changes in posture, more hand activity, keeping their mouth closed, playing with utensils, and shaking their head “no.”

Meals

Babies are ready for solid foods when they can hold their head steady and when they show interest, such as opening their mouth when a spoon with food comes toward them. At 6 months of age some babies are already taking 2 meals a day, while others are barely starting to eat solids. Don't worry about what other babies are eating. Most parents introduce single-ingredient new foods, one at a time, and watch for adverse reactions over 2–3 days (rash, vomiting). Once your baby has learned to spoon-feed, a variety of cereals, fruits, vegetables, and meats may be added. Let your baby's appetite guide you. By 9 months of age most babies are eating 3 meals a day.

Infants thrive with routines—including feeding routines. Try to have consistent times for meals. We encourage you to sit your baby in their high chair with the family for their meals. Because you are such an important influence on your child's diet, look at your own plate and see what foods

you are eating. Your baby is old enough now to notice your eating habits. There is ample evidence that infants transition to foods that the family is already consuming.

Try to incorporate the plate model visual to make your baby's meals well-balanced.



Types of Solids

It does not matter which food your baby tries first. But over the coming months, you can start giving your baby almost any fruit, vegetable, grain, and meat or other proteins. Pay attention that you are selecting foods that are cooked until they are soft and then cut into small pieces. Remember the more times your child is offered foods, the more likely they are to develop a taste for it. It may take up to 15 times to introduce a food before your child accepts it. Use small pieces of soft foods. Please note that we do not give babies honey, in any form, until they are 12 months of age.

Can I even give things others are allergic to?

Once your baby has had some fruits, vegetables, and cereals, you should also add in other foods. We recommend that if your baby has severe, persistent eczema or an egg allergy, you should talk with your provider about how to introduce

food allergens. The American Academy of Pediatrics now recommends that infants who are low risk for food allergies be given foods such as dairy, soy, wheat, nut butters, sesame, fish, shellfish, and eggs starting at 6 months old.

How will you know if your baby is having an allergy to a food?

If your baby has a rash all over their body within a few hours of starting a new food or they vomit within a few minutes of having a new food item, then call our clinic and let us know. If your baby has signs of facial swelling, persistent cough, or trouble breathing after starting a new food, call 911.

Finger Foods and Choking Concerns

Once your baby is sitting well and brings their hands and other things to their mouth, you may begin offering them soft finger foods that are cut small. Common finger foods are soft fruits, cooked vegetables, scrambled eggs, chopped and well-cooked chicken pieces, and smashed beans.

It's important to feed your baby in a seat and supervise closely for any choking. Many babies gag when they get a piece in the back of their throat. This looks like your baby is about to vomit but is not. This is temporary and keeps your baby from choking. However, choking is different. When a baby is choking, they are having trouble breathing. Either they are not making a sound or only making high pitched sounds. They are looking panicked in their face and they are having tugging of their skin around their neck or chest muscles. They might have a pale color to their face. Follow the guidance in the box above and call 911 if you are worried your baby is choking.

Make sure food is always cut into small pieces. Don't feed your child hard pieces of food such as raw carrots. Do not feed your baby chips, popcorn, or nuts until they can grind them with their back teeth—after four years old. Circular foods can block your baby's airway and cause choking. Cut grapes and hot dogs into small pieces.

Iron Intake

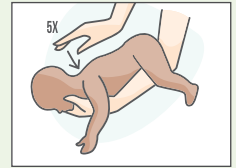
If your breastfed infant does not take sufficient iron-fortified cereal or other iron-rich foods give a dropper a day of a multivitamin with iron, like Tri-vi-sol with Iron or Poly-vi-sol with Iron. Be sure to clean your baby's teeth after giving iron vitamins. Use a damp washcloth to prevent staining.

Since iron stores from pregnancy are depleted by 6 months of age and your baby

Choking in an Infant Under 12 Months

What to Do If Your Child Is Choking

1. Check infant's mouth by opening the mouth with the thumb over the tongue and the fingers wrapped around the lower jaw. If the object is seen, it may be removed with a finger sweep. Do not perform a blind finger sweep on an infant less than 12 months of age.
2. If the infant is still choking, then place the infant's face down over your arm with head lower than the trunk. The infant's face should be in the support arm's hand and infant's legs should straddle the arm, one leg on each side of the elbow. Five blows are delivered with the heel of the hand between the infant's shoulder blades.
3. If back blows were not successful, turn the infant over and give 5 rapid chest compressions with 2 fingertips on chest (just below nipple line). This is to expel the object from the windpipe.
4. If breathing is not reinitiated after 5 back blows and 5 chest compressions, check infant's mouth again by opening the mouth with the thumb over the tongue and the fingers wrapped around the lower jaw. If the object is seen, it may be removed with a finger sweep.
5. If object is not removed and infant is still choking, start the sequence again with the back blows.



is in a period of rapid growth, the risk of iron deficiency and anemia are high over the next 18 months. Giving 2 servings a day of infant cereal helps prevent iron deficiency anemia. At this age a serving is 4 tablespoons ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) of dry cereal. Meat, either baby food or minced, is another source of dietary iron. Discuss options with your child's doctor if you have questions. Formula-fed infants receive sufficient iron in formula and do not need iron supplementation.

Vitamin D

Infant formula is fortified with vitamin D but breastmilk is not. If you infant's main milk source is breastmilk, continue to give vitamin D every day. You can give vitamin D by using a vitamin D liquid drop or a multivitamin liquid drop.

Dental Tips

As soon as teeth begin to appear, start using a soft-bristled, small toothbrush twice a day, preferably first thing in the morning and before bedtime (after the last feeding). Use a small smear of fluoride containing toothpaste.

You increase your child's chance of cavities if you share your spoon or fork with your baby. Cavities are due to bacteria contracted from other people. We also don't recommend that you "clean" a dropped pacifier in your own mouth.

Children should see a dentist within 6 months after their first tooth erupts.

A Medicaid dental provider can be found by searching 211Texas.org or by calling 877-847-8377 (THSteps Hotline).



SLEEP

By 6 months, most babies have settled into a schedule of 2-3 naps a day and sleep 8-10 hours overnight. The average amount of sleep in a 24 period is 14-15 hours.

The crib is the safest place for your baby to sleep. As they are starting to roll over, babies often roll in their sleep. We place babies on their back to sleep but if they roll to their tummy in the night, then it's OK for them to sleep on their tummy. To keep them safe sleeping, we do not recommend toys, stuffed animals, or pillows in the crib with your baby.

Remove any crib hanging toys at 6 months. Also be sure to drop the crib mattress to the lowest level once your baby can pull to a stand.

At night, most 6 month old babies can sleep without needing to feed. Babies do have times of lighter sleep during the night, during which they make sounds or cry out.

Many babies are able to return to deep sleep without assistance. Soon after 6 months most babies start to have separation anxiety when their primary caretaker is not in sight. This can trigger sleep problems.

Tips to Prevent Sleep Problems

- Have a soothing bedtime routine such as bath, bedtime story, and saying good night to family and favorite objects. A late evening breastfeeding or bottle should not be the last event in the bedtime routine.
- Your baby should be able to fall asleep on their own. Place your baby down in the crib awake but drowsy.
- Make middle of the night contacts brief and boring.

SAFETY

Most injuries to babies can be prevented.

Injuries occur because parents and caretakers are not aware of what their child can now do. Constant supervision is needed. This is a good age to use a play-yard or a pack-n-play for times like cooking, when you are in the garage, or times when it is difficult to watch your child or have them next to you.

Also in the household be careful that small objects are kept out of your child's reach. Some of the more worrisome choking risks are coins, magnets, and button (circle) batteries.

Poisoning

Children are very curious, which can lead them to getting a hold of dangerous detergents, medications, and other poisons. If your child should ingest a poison, call the Poison Center Network at 1-800-222-1222. Save this number in your phone. In case your child is seizing, has stopped breathing, or is limp: call 911.

The following information will be important:

1. The name of the poison
2. The amount ingested
3. The time it was ingested
4. Any symptoms
5. The age and weight of your child

Things to Remember

- Store toxic products and all medicines up high and out of reach.
- Throw away unused medications and empty poison containers.

- Do not put potentially harmful things, like car antifreeze, in food or drink containers.
- Teach children to stay away from your storage areas and medicine cabinets.
- Use child-protective safety latches and guards on doors, drawers, cabinets, etc.
- Avoid calling any medicines "candy."

High Blood Lead

Children can be exposed to lead by living in older homes (built before 1978) that have lead-based paints and/or by a family member's occupation or hobby. Lead can also be found in spices and makeups made outside of the United States. This lead exposure can be harmful. Please let your pediatrician know if you have concerns about a possible lead exposure for your child.

Falls

As your child's strength and curiosity grows, it is important to place gates on the top and bottom of stairs. Also, remove or cushion any sharp edged furniture, just in case your child falls against it. Edges of coffee tables and fireplaces frequently cause injuries. Make sure that your baby is strapped in properly at all times when in a stroller, high chair, car seat, or infant swing.



Car Safety

Most injuries and deaths caused by car crashes can be prevented by the use of car seats every time your child is in a vehicle. An infant should always sit in a rear-facing car seat until they are at least 2 years of age. A rear-facing car seat should never be placed in front of a passenger-side air bag. The safest place for all children less than 13 years of age is in the back seat. For more information about car seats and for information about having your seat checked for proper installment call 1-800-252-8255 (safe riders program) or 1-866-SEAT-CHECK (seatcheck.org).

Do not leave your child alone in a car, even for a "few seconds." Death and injuries from excessive heat or fumes can occur.

Burns

There are a number of ways that your child could be burned.

- At this age, children grab at everything. Never leave cups of hot drinks on tables or counter edges. Never carry hot liquids or food near your child or while holding your child.
- Do not let your child crawl or walk around stoves, wall or floor heaters, or other hot appliances.
- Turn pot handles away from the stove's edge so they are not reachable.
- A safe place for your child while you're cooking, eating, or unable to provide full attention is a playpen, high chair, or crib.
- Lower your water heater to 120 degrees.
- Children are at greatest risk in house fires. Test your smoke alarms every month and replace the batteries once a year.

If your baby does get burned, put the area in cool (not ice cold) water immediately. Keep the burned area in cool water until they stop crying. Then cover the burn loosely with a bandage or clean cloth and call your baby's doctor.

Sun Exposure

Avoid the sun during the hours of 10am to 4pm. If outside, stay in the shade, use a floppy hat to protect your baby's face, and use a broad spectrum sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher that is approved for children. Sun exposure during childhood can cause skin cancer and premature aging of the skin.

Stay Safe Around Water

As your baby moves around the house, make sure that you drain any tubs or standing water right after you finish using them. Stay within an arm's length of your child around water and make sure that you are giving your child your full attention while they are in water. 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.

Insect Protection

When outside, especially in the hours around sunrise and sunset, we recommend protecting your baby against insect bites. Products that contain picaridin effectively prevent mosquito bites. Products that contain DEET are also effective but should only be applied to exposed skin areas (not on the hands or face). We recommend that you wash off insect repellents once you have come inside the building again to minimize how many hours your baby's skin has contact with it.

Walkers

Infant walkers are not recommended.

Infant walkers are described as seats with the baby inside a ring around them that they push with their feet. These allow children to get to places where they can pull heavy objects or hot foods onto themselves. Also, many children in baby walkers have had injuries from falling down stairs, walking out of doors, and running into furniture that then falls onto them.

DEVELOPMENT

Gross Motor (Movement) Skills

Most babies can roll both front to back and back to front by 6 months of age. Many babies can sit by 6 months, but often it takes another month or two to be able to sit without support. Over the next 1–2 months, your baby will probably start to crawl and start pulling to a stand.

Give your child a chance to practice moving in different ways. Allow free time to move around the floor. The importance of unrestricted movement in safe, supervised areas on the floor cannot be stressed enough. Infants who spend too much time in confining equipment such as car seats, strollers, swings, bouncy seats, and exersaucers may be delayed in their movement skills.



Fine Motor (Finger & Hand) Skills

Most 6 month olds can reach for things in front of them. Over the next few months your baby will learn how to transfer blocks or other small objects from one hand to the other.

Babies this age love to put their fingers into holes, grasp blocks or soft blocks, and throw things. If they are throwing things that are not OK to throw, redirect by giving them a soft ball or block to throw instead. Give your baby lots of opportunities to use their hands.

Language

At 6 months most babies are vocalizing with increasing frequency and variety. Babbling (repetitive consonant sounds such as ma–ma, da–da) is the next step in language development. They get to that point by first repeating sounds they are hearing. At the beginning they might say that same sound repeatedly for days at a time. But over weeks, they will begin to respond to the sounds you make, and try to follow your lead. You will notice them watching your mouth and copying sounds and noises you make. If your baby is not copying sounds you make by the end of their 6th month after their due date, please discuss this with your pediatrician. Lots of loving talk is the best way to help your baby’s language development.

- Talk directly to your baby. Use many gestures and expressions. Overact.
- Use key labeling words when you talk. “Where are your socks? Let’s find your socks.” Rather than “Oh, where are they?”
- Follow your child’s interest. If the sound they are saying quite a bit that day is “bah” then copy that sound “bah.” And then repeat back to them other words that start with that sound such as “book,” “ball” “baby”.

Over the next few months your baby will begin to understand NO by the tone of your voice. Some families teach their baby basic sign language at this age. Signs are easier for babies to learn at this age than spoken language. Signing may reduce frustration, improve communication, and is not detrimental to speech development.

Social

Your baby will get more out of interacting with people than with screens or inanimate objects. They will grow their brain’s functioning when they are learning from their caretakers rather than screens.

- Play peek–a–boo
- Wave “bye–bye”
- Bang objects together
- Play patty–cake

By 8 months, most babies become clearly attached to their main caretaker and fear separation. By 1 year of age, this separation anxiety often increases and your baby may also begin to fear strangers. Separation anxiety can be stressful to caretakers. Try to accept this phase and be proud of your importance to your baby. They are practicing loving for life. The more they can love now and feel love back, the more secure and loving your baby will be.

Read to Your Child

Reading aloud to your child is the best way to help your child love books and learning. Babies enjoy complex patterns and color variation at this age. Look for books with large, brightly colored pictures. Babies love to bring everything to their mouth, and books are no exception. In the coming months as you talk about the pages with your baby, they’ll come to love them for more than just the feel of cardboard in their mouth. Screen time is not recommended at this age. However, video chatting with family and friends does help them build bonds with people and is not harmful.



READING SUGGESTIONS AND RESOURCES

Websites and Apps

[healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org)

American Academy of Pediatrics parenting website.

[healthychildren.org/growinghealthy](https://www.healthychildren.org/growinghealthy)

Dynamic interactive website to help encourage healthy habits for children 0–5 years of age.

[vaccineinformation.org](https://www.vaccineinformation.org)

The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia information on vaccines.

[cdc.gov/vaccines-children](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines-children)

National Immunization Program

[seatcheck.org](https://www.seatcheck.org)

Information about car seats

KidsDoc – from the AAP App

The KidsDoc Symptom Checker allows parents to choose from a wide range of symptoms, then follow the symptom decision chart to determine the appropriate action to take, whether it be home care or a trip to the emergency room.

CDC Milestone Tracker App

This app helps you track your own child’s development over time. It also shares tips to help you encourage the next step in their development.

Books

Baby 411: Clear Answers and Smart Advice for Your Baby’s First Year

Ari Brown, MD and Denise Fields