

Your Child at Six to Nine Months

STIMULATING YOUR OLDER BABY REQUIRES NEW ACTIVITIES that will help improve their development in all areas. At this age, babies are very social and interact with others by smiling, waving, babbling and entertaining anyone they know. Babies this age are increasing skills like grasping, rolling over, sitting up, and possibly even crawling. Set up a safe environment for your baby to explore; mobility will improve every day and your baby will try to reach any objects that look interesting.

Sleep At this stage, your baby still needs two or possibly three naps a day. Put your baby down to sleep for the night between 6 and 8 pm, and expect 11 to 13 hours of sleep. However, some babies, especially those who are breastfed, may still wake for a night feeding.

Nutrition The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends waiting to introduce solid foods until six months of age. Some basic ways for starting solids are:

- › Mix single-ingredient solids like rice cereal with equal amounts of breast milk or formula.
- › Start with one feeding of solids a day. Add a second feeding when your baby can eat two to three tablespoons per feeding.
- › It is important to begin with vegetables, then fruit and finally protein. When your baby becomes used to spoon feedings, add single-ingredient smooth or pureed foods like carrots, peas, apples or “stage one” baby foods in the jar.
- › To make sure your baby is not allergic to a specific food, be sure to wait at least two to three days before starting another new food.

Physical Development

- › Develops eye-hand coordination
- › Sits with, and eventually without, being supported
- › Reaches for a bottle or spoon when being fed
- › Transfers objects from one hand to the other
- › Begins to crawl (some infants never crawl; however, by 9 months, many babies will)
- › Starts to stand (this developmental stage varies for each child; however, some infants are able to pull themselves up and hold onto furniture by 9 months)

Social and Emotional Development

- › Talks or babbles while looking in a mirror
- › Becomes upset if a toy is taken away
- › Responds to own name and recognizes family members' names
- › Shows mild to severe anxiety when parents leave (separation anxiety)

Cognitive Development

- › Develops a better awareness of the world around them
- › Begins to look for and find partially hidden objects, watches a ball rolled out of sight
- › Tries to get objects that are out of reach
- › Makes noises to show displeasure or satisfaction
- › Explores with hands and mouth

ADDITIONAL SAFETY TIPS FOR YOUR BABY AT SIX TO NINE MONTHS

A Home Safety Checklist should be completed at each stage of your child's development. A sample checklist is provided for you on page 70.

- › Prevent injuries by repairing wobbly furniture or putting it in a room your baby does not enter, by using toy chests without lids or with supports that hold a lid open in any position, and by securing televisions, dressers and other heavy objects
- › Prevent choking by keeping potential hazards like keys, coins, rings, loose buttons and other small items out of baby's reach
- › Prevent falls by using child safety gates at the top and bottom of all staircases
- › Prevent poisoning and other injuries by keeping purses and wallets out of baby's reach
- › Always supervise your child when she is in and around water, both inside and outside the home

Positive Parenting Activities that Promote Nurturing and Attachment

Help your baby cope with separation anxiety by:

- › Explaining that you are going to leave, but that you'll return
- › Always saying goodbye when you leave your baby to help teach your baby that you will come back
- › Providing a comfort object that will help your baby feel close to you while you are away



When to be Concerned

While each baby develops at his or her own pace, you should be aware of certain milestones your child should be reaching. Failure to reach certain milestones may be a sign of medical or developmental problems requiring special attention. You should let your baby's doctor know if at six months your child:

- › Seems very stiff, with tight muscles
- › Seems very floppy, like a rag doll
- › Refuses to cuddle
- › Cannot sit with help
- › Consistently turns one or both eyes in or out
- › Doesn't seem to enjoy being around people
- › Doesn't laugh or squeal
- › Doesn't actively reach for objects

HERE'S HELP



Use the **Family Resources on pages 72–78** to learn about a variety of family support services available in your community.