

## Well Child Care at 6 Months

### Feeding

If you haven't started your baby on baby foods (other than cereal), you can start now. Begin with fruits and vegetables. Start one new food at a time for a few days to make sure your baby digests it well. Do not start meats until your baby is 7 to 8 months old. Do not give foods that require chewing. Don't start eggs until age 12 months. At meals give the baby formula, or breast-feed your baby before giving baby food.

Your baby should continue having breast milk or infant formula until he is 1 year old. Your baby may soon be ready for a cup although it will be messy at first. Try giving a cup occasionally to see if your baby likes it. Don't put your baby to bed with a bottle. Your baby will start to see the bottle as a security object and this will make it difficult to wean your child from the bottle. Prolonged bottle use, especially at night will lead to tooth decay and may cause ear infections.

Make cereal with formula or breast milk only. Use a spoon to feed your baby cereal, not a bottle or an infant feeder. Sitting up while eating helps your baby learn good eating habits.

### Development

At this age babies are usually rolling over and beginning to sit by themselves. Babies squeal, babble, laugh, and often cry very loudly. They may be afraid of people they do not know. Meet your baby's needs quickly and be patient with your baby. If you feel overwhelmed, ask people you trust for help, or talk with your health care provider.

### Sleep

6-month-olds may not want to be put in bed. A favorite blanket or stuffed animal may make bedtime easier. Do not put a bottle in the bed with your baby. Develop a bedtime routine like playing a game, singing a lullaby, turning the lights out, and giving a goodnight kiss. Make the routine the same every night. Be calm and consistent with your baby at bedtime. If your baby is not sleeping through the night, ask your doctor for further information about preventing sleep problems. And remember, do not put a bottle in the bed with your baby.

### Safety Tips

#### Avoid Choking and Suffocation

- Cords, ropes, or strings around the baby's neck can choke him. Keep cords away from the crib.
- Keep all small, hard objects out of reach.
- Use only unbreakable toys without sharp edges or small parts that can come loose.
- Avoid foods on which a child might choke (such as candy, hot dogs, peanuts, popcorn).

#### Prevent Fires and Burns

- Develop and practice a fire escape plan.
- Check your smoke detector to make sure it is working.
- Keep a fire extinguisher in or near the kitchen.
- Check food temperatures carefully, especially if foods have been heated in a microwave oven.
- Keep hot foods and liquids out of reach.
- Put plastic covers in unused electrical outlets.
- Throw away cracked or frayed old electrical cords.
- Turn the water heater down to 120°F (50°C).

#### Avoid Falls

- Keep crib and playpen sides up.
- Avoid using walkers.
- Install safety gates to guard stairways.
- Lock doors to dangerous areas like the basement or garage.
- Check drawers, tall furniture, and lamps to make sure they can't fall over easily.

#### Prevent Poisoning