

Parent Express

A GUIDE FOR YOU AND YOUR BABY



TOPIC

6 months old

Dear parent,

Your baby is a half year old! Now that your baby has reached the half-year mark, she probably is spending most of her awake time sitting up, playing, babbling, looking, and touching everything. She might be driving you a little crazy because she wants to grab everything she sees. Try to be patient – she is learning about the world.

So far, we have talked about how your baby grows each month. But another person has also grown – you.



What it's like to be 6 months old

How I grow

- I turn and twist in all directions.
- I roll from my back to my stomach.
- I sometimes sit up with support for as long as a half hour.
- I hold onto an object with one hand and then put it in the other hand.

- I hold one building block, reach for a second one, and look for a third one right away.
- I grab for an object when it drops.

How I talk

- I make sounds such as f, v, th, s, sh, sz, m, and n.

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Disabilities
accommodated
with prior notification.

- I still babble a lot, but I have more control of sounds.
- I'm beginning to understand some words by the tone of voice you use.

How I respond

- I pick things up, shake them, and listen to the sound they make when I drop them.
- I play games with people I know.
- I get upset when I'm around grown-up strangers, but I'm friendly with children I don't know.
- I coo, hum, or stop crying sometimes when I hear music.
- I keep busy doing something all the time.

How I understand

- I know that I have to use my hands to pick up something.
- I look at and study things for a long time.
- I turn objects upside down just to get another view of them.
- I turn when I hear my name.

How I feel

- I haven't learned to control my feelings yet.
- I complain and howl when I don't get my way.
- I giggle, coo, and squeal with joy when I'm happy.
- I have strong likes and dislikes about food.

Talk to your baby

You don't have to feel funny talking to your baby just because she can't talk back yet or because you feel others are watching and judging you. When you answer your baby's babbling with words or noises that imitate her sounds, you are teaching your baby that sounds are one way we communicate with each other. Communication is an important part of learning.

Babies who are spoken to also learn to speak more easily. This is because they imitate the sounds and facial expressions of those talking to them. The more they are spoken to, the more practice they get. Notice how your baby watches your face as you talk to her.

The next time you find yourself feeling self-conscious, remember that your baby is learning from you. You are taking advantage of the



window of opportunity for her brain's ability to develop language. Communicating with others is one of the most important things human beings do. Help your baby with this skill.

Read to your baby

Your baby is now more able to use both hands to hold, wave, or bang objects, and he will enjoy doing that with books. He will put books into his mouth and squeeze and drop them. Soft, washable vinyl or cloth books with bright, simple pictures of familiar objects are best.

He will also enjoy the pictures in the books for short periods. He might sit on your lap while you talk to him about the pictures and will enjoy hearing your words and rhymes. Try reciting or singing while reading to him. The more book reading, singing, and rhyming you do, the better. You are helping him form a love for books!





Change in feeding

At 6 months, your baby will be ready for other foods in addition to breast milk or iron-fortified formula. Usually an iron-fortified infant cereal is first. Choose a single-ingredient infant cereal such as rice, oatmeal, or barley.

How to feed

Put a teaspoon of infant cereal in a dish (not in a bottle) and mix it with iron-fortified formula or breast milk. Don't add sugar, salt, butter, or any seasonings.

For the first few weeks, offer the cereal once or twice a day after breastfeeding or bottle feeding. Use a baby-size spoon to feed your baby. Give her just a small taste at first. If she seems interested, give her a few more tastes with the spoon. If she doesn't like it or pushes the spoon away, wait a few days and then try again. Don't force your baby to eat. She will accept solids when she is ready.

Try only one new food at a time, so you will be able to know what food to avoid if your

baby does not respond well to it. For example, if you start with a couple of teaspoons of infant rice cereal, continue for a week before introducing infant oatmeal or infant barley.

The first feedings probably will be messy. Your baby has been only sucking up to now, but she soon will learn how to swallow solids. With a little patience, you can help your baby learn to eat and like different foods. Try to make mealtime pleasant for both of you.

Sometimes a new food can cause diarrhea, a skin rash, or even a runny nose. If you think your baby has an allergy problem, check with your health-care provider.

Take care of your back

Protect yourself from future back problems. When you pick up your baby, don't bend over from the waist. Instead, bend your knees and kneel or squat, keeping your back as straight as possible. Hold onto your baby and



straighten up from the squat position. Make your knees, not your back, do the work.

Use the same knee bends or squats, with your back straight, when you want to pick up something from the floor. This helps prevent back strain.

Remember to watch your posture. When standing or sitting, hold your back straight and pull in your stomach. Good posture protects your back from future aches and pains.

Games babies play

Getting what you want: Using a tool game

Purpose

This game encourages your baby to use objects as tools for getting what he wants.

How to play

- Put your baby in a sitting position on the floor. You can sit beside or in front of him.
- Place a small blanket within his reach.
- Put a favorite toy on the blanket, but place it out of reach.

- If your baby does not pull the blanket to get the toy, push the blanket toward him until he can reach the toy.
- Use action words to describe what he is doing. Say, "See, you got the ball by pulling the blanket." (You can use towels, potholders, or pillows instead of a blanket.)

All babies are different and grow at their own pace. Don't worry if your baby isn't doing exactly the same things as other babies of the same age.

Children learn by watching parents

When raising their children, many parents either do what their own parents did or do just the opposite. What do you copy from your parents? What do you do that is different? Have you thought about why you copy some things and reject others?

Even though your baby is only 6 months old, she is learning from your example. It is so important to think about the examples and patterns you set, even at this early age. Once set, patterns of family life are hard to change.



Some patterns that influence your child's life are:

- How you talk to each other
- How you work out problems
- How you show your feelings

You are the most important influence in your child's life.

A question about crying

My baby wakes up almost every night and cries until I go to him. Then he wants to play instead of sleep! What can I do?

Some babies have a hard time sleeping at night. They spend the entire day exploring and playing and then at night, even though they are exhausted, they have trouble settling down. They wake up during the night and want to play.

Parents have to gently let their babies know that it is bedtime, not playtime. When your baby wakes up in the night, go to him. Pick him up, cuddle him, talk to him, change his diaper, and then lay him down to sleep. Tell him that it is bedtime and that he must try to go to sleep.

You also can try spending some quiet time with him before bedtime. Read from a favorite book, play a quiet game together, or hold him closely and sing to him before putting him down for the night.

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