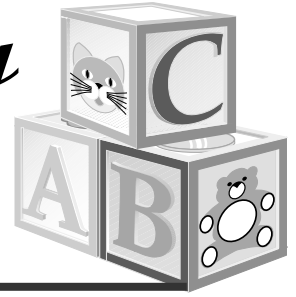


You and Your Baby

Month 6



Baby's Health

Remember: Check your baby's immunization record this month.

Baby's teeth are starting to show now, if they haven't already. The lower, middle teeth usually come in first. The top teeth come in next. As the teeth push through tender gums, your baby may be uncomfortable. Drooling and irritability are common. If baby drools much, you will need to change her frequently so baby's skin does not become chafed by wet clothing. A bib will protect the chest and can be changed easier than a shirt.

For sore gums, a teething ring may help. Don't be surprised if your baby likes to chew on your finger! A clean, cool, damp washcloth to chew on also may help. Some babies like hard biscuits. Try both to see which works best. Caution: hard "teething" biscuits may be a choking hazard. If your baby appears to be in a lot of pain, a pain reliever may be needed. Check with your doctor.

Along with teeth comes a new activity—keeping teeth clean. Wipe baby's new teeth with a soft cloth to remove food and milk buildup. Baby teeth allowed to decay may affect permanent teeth that replace them. Most baby tooth decay is caused by giving drinks with sugar, like soda or sweet tea.

Family Focus

Your baby is beginning to explore her world; you need to make sure it is safe. Now's the time to begin using

some control, such as babyproofing the house or distracting her from doing something harmful or annoying.



This is the beginning of discipline. Discipline also means guiding a child's actions to make her acceptable to others and to herself.

Babies under a year old are too young to understand the reasons for stopping something they are doing. For example, your baby may love to throw toys on the floor. She likes to hear the noise or watch the toys bounce and thinks it's a great game! Actually, you can use this as a learning time — she is learning cause and effect. She drops it, and you pick it up!

How do you get the baby to stop? Remove the toys and distract her with something else she can do. Give her a hug, too.

Praise your baby when she does something you like. For example, bath time is usually a good relaxed time. Praise how well she is sitting in the tub and/or playing with the toys. Your baby loves attention, such as hugs, smiles, kind voices.

Ignore misbehavior, such as throwing or spitting food, if it is not harmful. Don't look at, smile at, or scold the baby. Do this until the baby stops. However, if she is doing something harmful, remove her from the situation, and give her a safe toy or activity to be involved in.

Remember to praise her for doing something that is OK after you have ignored or redirected her to another activity.

Discipline is preventing problems before they happen. That is why babyproofing the house is such a great prevention tool. Provide a safe place for your baby to explore — both inside and outside — and you will prevent problems. Remember, babies are learning by exploring their world around them.

If you can strike a balance between providing necessary controls, a sense of humor, and loving care, your baby will begin to learn to think and act responsibly.

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 or practice their new skill of standing up in bed.

Parents have to let their babies know gently but firmly that it is bedtime, not playtime. When your baby wakes up in the night, go to her. Pick her up, cuddle her, talk to her, change her diaper, and then put her down on her tummy

to sleep. Tell her firmly that it is bedtime and that she must try to go to sleep.

You also can try spending some quiet time with baby before bedtime. Rock the baby, play a quiet game together, or hold her closely and sing to her before putting her down for the night. This serves as an unwinding period.



Baby's Development

Physical

Your baby's legs are strengthening. She probably loves to stand up with you holding under her arms. She may use that time to bounce up and down. These exercises help prepare her legs for walking and crawling.

Some babies are learning to sit up. Be sure to provide soft surfaces to fall on. Keep a close eye on her — she could get caught in an uncomfortable position. She can turn and twist in all directions. Also, your baby can creep backwards and forwards.

Your baby can hold an object with one hand and then put it in the other hand. She can hold one object, reach for a second one, and look for a third one right away. She can also reach for the object when it drops.

Emotional/Social

Your baby now is fully able to distinguish between you and other people, so don't be surprised if she mistrusts strangers. Don't try to force your baby into someone else's arms if she rebels. Hold the baby when she meets others. Let her get used to them gradually. Or,

you could have the stranger hand her a favorite toy. A 6-month-old baby can feel real anxiety if forced into a frightening situation. Physical closeness to a familiar adult will help baby adjust to and trust other unfamiliar adults.

Mental

Language development continues this month with the addition of the following consonants to baby's vocabulary: f, v, th, s, sh, z, sz, m, and n. Don't be surprised if your baby "talks" more to females—this is usual. Your baby may vocalize displeasure by grunting and growling when she is displeased. She'll also show pleasure by cooing and laughing.

She turns when she hears her name and is beginning to understand more of your words by the tone of your voice.

Your baby now is more alert than ever before. Some babies are visually alert up to 50 percent of daylight hours. While playing with one object, your baby may reach for another and visually key in on a third. Six-month-old babies have an unending curiosity.

Food

Around the sixth month, cereal is usually added, depending on the child. Your baby should be able to sit up, lean forward, and push away before beginning cereals. Start with an iron-fortified infant cereal.

Adding too many different foods too soon may cause allergies and overeating. So, keep it simple.

For feeding a baby cereals, a good rule to remember is "A smile with every spoonful—whether accepted or rejected." Your baby will learn to associate pleasant times with eating and may become more cooperative.

Vegetables and fruits are usually started after cereals. Choose mild-tasting vegetables first, such as green beans, carrots, or squash. Don't add salt or fat to vegetables.

Delay giving your baby juices until she is able to drink from a cup. Breast milk and formula have plenty of vitamins.



This information sheet is one in a series titled You and Your Baby. Contact your county Extension office for more information on you and your baby. Also, the American Academy of Pediatrics provides educational reading material:

American Academy of Pediatrics • P.O. Box 747 • Elk Grove Village, IL 60009-0747 OR www.aap.org

www.ext.msstate.edu

Revised by **Louise E. Davis, Ph.D.**, Extension Child and Family Development Specialist and **Linda S. Patterson, R.N., M.S.N.**, Extension Health Education Specialist. Mississippi State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, or veteran status.

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