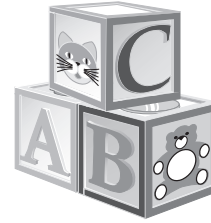


You and Your Baby

Month 6



Baby's Safety & Health

Remember to check your baby's vaccination/shot record this month.

Your baby's teeth are starting to show now, if they haven't already. The bottom 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 your baby drools a lot, you will need to change her frequently so her skin will not become chafed by wet clothing. A bib will protect her chest and is easier to change 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 your baby's new teeth with a soft cloth to remove food and milk buildup. If your baby's teeth decay, it could affect her permanent teeth. 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, so you need to make sure it is safe. Now is the time to begin using some control, such as babyproofing the house or distracting him from doing things that are harmful or annoying.

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

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. He 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—he is learning cause and effect. He drops it, and you pick it up!

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

Praise your baby when he does something you like. For example, bath time is usually a relaxed time. Praise how well he is sitting in the tub or playing with the toys.

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 he stops. However, if he is doing something harmful, remove him from the situation, and give him a safe toy or activity to be involved in.

Remember to praise him for doing something that is OK after you have ignored or redirected him to another activity. Your baby loves attention, such as hugs, smiles, and kind voices.

Discipline is preventing problems before they happen. That is why baby-proofing the house is such a great idea. Provide a safe place for your baby to explore—both inside and outside—and you will prevent problems.

Remember, babies are learning by exploring the 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 him. Pick him up, cuddle him, talk to him, change his diaper, and then put him down on his back to sleep. Tell him firmly that it is bedtime and that he must try to go to sleep.

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



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Baby's Development

Physical

Your baby's legs are getting stronger. 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 backward and forward.

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. Another idea is to have the unfamiliar person 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 your baby adjust to and trust other unfamiliar adults.

Mental

Language development continues this month with the addition of the following sounds to your baby's vocabulary: f, v, th, s, sh, z, sz, m, and n.

Your baby may vocalize displeasure by grunting and growling. 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. Your 6-month-old baby has an unending curiosity.

Food

Around the 6th 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 is to give your baby a smile with every spoonful of food, whether she accepts it or rejects it. Your baby will learn that mealtimes are pleasant, and she may become more cooperative.

Vegetables and fruits are usually started after cereals. Choose mild-tasting vegetables first, such as green beans, carrots, and squash. Don't add salt or fat to vegetables. Don't give your baby juice 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 called **You and Your Baby**. Contact your county Extension office or visit www.childcaremississippi.org for more information on you and your baby. The American Academy of Pediatrics also provides educational reading materials at www.healthychildren.org.*



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Revised and distributed by **Dr. Louise E. Davis**, Extension Child and Family Development Specialist.

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Information Sheet 1376

Extension Service of Mississippi State University, cooperating with U.S. Department of Agriculture. Published in furtherance of Acts of Congress, May 8 and June 30, 1914. MELISSA J. MIXON, Interim Director (POD-05-10)