


## Well-Child Visits

### Keep your baby healthy.

Regular medical checkups are important for all babies. Your baby's doctor or nurse will check your baby's growth and development and answer any questions you have.

If your baby needs any missing vaccine doses, catch up now. Vaccines can prevent diseases that may lead to pneumonia, blood infections, brain damage, and death in children. Being fully vaccinated helps prevent serious diseases.



Make sure you, other children living in the home, and your baby's other caregivers are up to date on vaccines. This helps protect your baby even more. To see and download your family's vaccine records online visit [myirmobile.com](http://myirmobile.com). 

### Antibiotic use.

When your baby gets sick, you may want to give medicine to help them feel better. However, do not expect your doctor to give your baby antibiotics every time. Viruses cause colds and antibiotics do not kill viruses. Always ask your doctor or nurse before giving medicine to your baby.

## Oral Health

### Keep your baby's first teeth healthy.

The health of your baby's first teeth is very important. First teeth help your baby eat and speak well. They hold space for adult teeth, which helps prevent teeth from growing in crooked. Cavities in baby teeth may lead to cavities in adult teeth.

Here are some tips to keep your baby's gums and teeth healthy:

- Clean your baby's gums every night before bed with a moist cloth or a small soft toothbrush.
- When your baby's teeth first come in, brush them twice a day with a rice-size amount of fluoride toothpaste.

- Lift your baby's lips once a month and look carefully at their teeth. If you notice pale or dark spots or bleeding gums visit the dentist or doctor.
- Remove your nipple or bottle's nipple from your baby's mouth if your baby falls asleep while feeding. Formula or human milk that stays in your baby's mouth while sleeping may cause cavities.
- Do not share your toothbrush, eating utensils, and cups with your baby. Germs that cause tooth decay may easily spread from your mouth to your baby's mouth.
- Have your baby's teeth checked by a dentist or doctor by age 1.



## Nutrition and Physical Activity

### No juice.

Juice is not healthy for babies under 1 year old. Juice may make babies less hungry for nutritious foods that help them grow. It can also be bad for new teeth that are forming. Your baby's main drink should still be human milk or formula. But give your baby a little water in an open cup to practice drinking from it.

### Eat together as a family.

Your baby learns about eating by watching you eat. Talk with your baby about new foods they taste, smell, and touch. Small pieces of food that are easy to pick up and soft enough to squish are fun to touch and taste. Offer small pieces of whole grain dry cereal, soft fruit, cooked pasta, cooked vegetables, and meat.



*Keep offering me new yummy foods!*

Even if your baby has some teeth, they are not old enough to eat hard foods. Babies this age can choke on hard foods like hard candy, nuts, popcorn, and raw carrots.

Foods like grapes or hot dogs, can also cause choking. Cut all food into small, bite-size pieces. To reduce the risk of choking, stay near your baby and watch while they eat. If you breast or chest feed, keep going for as long as you and your baby desire.

### Switch from a bottle to a cup.

By age 1, your baby should drink from an open cup at meals and snack times. Keep helping your baby practice drinking from a cup.



*Let me start using a cup to drink water.*

Do not choose a cup with a "no-spill valve." The only way your baby can get liquid out of many no-spill cups is to suck. This prevents your baby from learning to sip. A snap-on or screw-on lid can reduce spills and still allow your baby to sip. Give small amounts of liquid to limit the mess if spilled.

Here are some other tips:

- Use a cup with 2 handles to make it easier for your baby to hold.
- Use a cup with a weighted base to prevent it from tipping over.
- Offer only water unless it is mealtime. At mealtime, offer human milk or formula in a cup.

# Growth and Development

## Your baby's relationships are important.

Your baby's relationship with you and other caregivers is very important for health and development. Your baby's brain develops constantly, and every moment counts. The everyday things you and your baby's caregivers do help their brain develop. Your baby learns from you and everyone around them.

Here are some tips on how to interact with your baby:

- Make faces, point and gesture to encourage your baby to watch you as you do things in your daily routine. Talk to your baby about what will happen next as you do things with them, like when you change diapers, feed, and bathe them.
- Cuddle with your baby while you talk about the pictures in their books. Show your baby the book and point to pictures and words.
- Play copycat games. Make a funny sound and then wait for your baby to make it. Copy your baby's sounds, too.

Your baby may start to be more comfortable around people they spend the most time with and may be more anxious around strangers. Remind everyone who takes care of your baby how important they are to your baby.



*Talk to me. It helps my brain develop.*

## Your baby's development.

Each baby develops at their own pace. If at 9 months your baby does not sit up or make babbling sounds, or if you have any other development questions, you can get help.

Talk with your baby's doctor or nurse or you can call the Help Me Grow Washington Hotline at 1-800-322-2588 and visit [helpmegrowwa.org/child-development](https://www.helpmegrowwa.org/child-development).

They can help you check your baby's development and connect you with the Early Support for Infant and Toddlers (ESIT) programs in your community.



"Sometimes the littlest things take up the most room in your heart." —Winnie the Pooh

# Safety

## Prevent falls.

A fall may cause cuts, broken teeth and bones, or head injuries. The best way to keep your baby safe is to stay close to them.

Here are some other ways to help prevent falls:

- Move chairs that might tip over so your baby cannot climb on them.
- Move furniture away from windows. Do not put your baby's crib near a window or any hanging cords.
- Remember that window screens will not stop your baby from falling out of a window. Install window stops or guards that can be removed by an adult in an emergency.
- Check the side rails of your baby's crib. If they're not high enough, lower the mattress.
- Keep gates closed at the top and bottom of stairs. Make sure the gates stay in place when you use them.

## Keep your baby's car seat rear facing.

Your baby must ride in a rear-facing car seat until at least 2 years of age. Use a rear-facing seat as long as possible. It gives your baby the best protection in event of a car accident.

The rear-facing position helps support your baby's head, neck, and spine during a crash. This helps spread the force caused by a crash more evenly across your baby's entire body and reduces the risk of an injury.

For more information to keep your family safe in the car or about Washington's child passenger safety laws visit [wacarseats.com](https://www.wacarseats.com).

## Air bags are dangerous to babies and children.

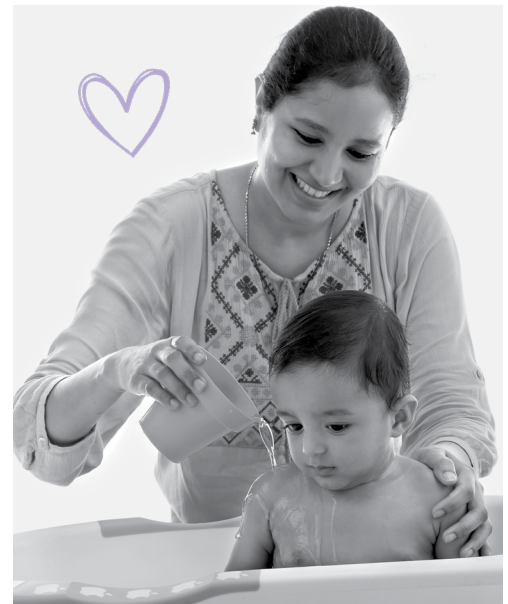
Air bags can seriously injure or kill a baby or child in the front seat, even in a minor crash. Some vehicles, such as pick-up trucks and sports cars, have air bags but no backseat. These vehicles often have an air bag on/off switch. Always check with your vehicle's manufacturer before you put a car seat in the front seat of any vehicle. Washington State law requires all children to ride in the backseat until age 13, when possible.

For more information about air bags, visit [nhtsa.gov/equipment/air-bags](https://www.nhtsa.gov/equipment/air-bags).

## Stay with your baby in the bath.

A baby can drown quickly and quietly in only a few inches of water! Stay with your baby the entire time they are in the tub. Do not leave the room, even for a second.

Even if your baby sits up well or uses a bath seat, do not leave them alone or with an older child. Drowning is silent and can take place in less than 1 inch of water.



*Don't leave me alone in the bath. Stay with me the whole time.*

## Thanks for reading!

Share this letter with other caregivers in your child's life. You'll hear from us again before your baby is 12 months old with information on:

- Your child's first dental appointment.
- Pregnancy planning.
- Locking up poisons.
- Creating a screen time plan for your family.

## For the Health of All Our Children

Watch Me Grow Washington is a program of the Washington State Department of Health

 @WatchMeGrowWA  [www.watchmegrowwa.org](https://www.watchmegrowwa.org)