



# 6 Months



## Well-Child Visits

### 6 month checkup time!

Your baby is growing and changing fast! It is important to check their growth and development often. Write down any questions you have so you can ask them at your baby's 6 month checkup.

## Nutrition and Physical Activity

### Tips for starting solid foods:

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends only breast or chest feeding for the first 6 months and continuing after solid foods are introduced as long as you and your baby want.

Human milk gives your baby nourishment, comfort, and security. Human milk can help protect babies from illnesses and diseases. Human milk or formula should be your baby's main form of nutrition for the first year.

You'll know your baby is ready for solid food when they can:

- Sit up with little support.
  - Hold their head up on their own.
  - Show interest in eating by moving their tongue side to side or opening their mouth when they see a spoon.
- This may happen around 6 months old.

Offer your baby a wide variety of nutritious foods. Strained pureed meats or iron-fortified cereals are good options. Make the mixture thin at first so your baby can learn to eat it easily.

Try mixing 1 teaspoon of baby cereal or meat with 2 teaspoons of human milk or infant formula.

Next, try foods, such as avocado, banana, cooked sweet potato, squash, or peas. Be sure to peel and mash foods until smooth. Only offer soft foods.

Serve food at room temperature or slightly warmed, but not too hot! Offer your baby a small amount of solid food, 1 to 4 tablespoons once a day.

Gradually increase to 2 to 3 times a day. Babies may make a face or spit food out, and that's ok! Solids are a new experience for them. Let them explore and get messy.

Babies will let you know when they've had enough to eat. They may close their mouths tightly, turn their heads away, spit out food, or shake their heads.

Offer your baby one new food at a time and wait 3 to 5 days before starting another food. If your baby vomits or has a rash or diarrhea, this may be from the new food.

Stop giving them that food and call your baby's doctor or nurse. If there isn't a reaction, continue that food and introduce other new foods.

It is safe to introduce foods that contain allergens (peanuts, eggs, milk) after 6 months but wait until your baby is at least 12 months old before offering honey or foods made with honey because of the risk of botulism.

For more information, see the brochure Feeding Your Baby, 6 to 12 months in this mailing. If you have questions about food allergies, talk with your baby's doctor or WIC staff.



Let me try small pieces of soft or mashed food.

## Oral Health

### New teeth are coming in!

Between 6 and 12 months, your baby may begin to show signs of new teeth.

They may have swollen, tender gums and may not eat or sleep well. Here are some tips to help soothe sore gums:

- Offer a cold (not frozen) teething ring to chew on.
- Offer a clean, cold, damp washcloth to chew on.
- Gently rub your baby's gums with a clean finger.

Do not use teething gels. Use of teething gels can lead to a serious condition where the oxygen level in your baby's blood becomes very low. If nothing in the list above helps to soothe them, talk with your baby's doctor or dentist.

Clean your baby's teeth and gums at least twice a day and before bed. Use a moist cloth or a small, soft toothbrush. Add a rice-size amount of fluoride toothpaste once teeth start showing.

Avoid sharing toothbrushes and eating utensils with your baby. You and your older children can pass cavity-causing germs through saliva to your baby. Have your baby's teeth checked by a dentist or doctor by 12 months of age.

## Growth and Development

### Early relationships are key.

The relationships your baby forms with you and other caregivers will affect the rest of their life. Your baby needs adults who want to have close, caring relationships with them and who can meet your baby's physical needs.

Remember, your baby:

- Has feelings and needs to feel loved, wanted, and special.
- Needs caregivers to respond quickly when crying.
- Learns by playing and interacting with adults.

Each baby develops at their own pace. If you have questions or concerns about your baby's development, talk with their doctor or nurse. For more information, you can call the Help Me Grow Washington Hotline where they will connect you with a specialist in your area to help you with your concerns and find local services to check your baby's progress. Call the Help Me Grow Washington Hotline at 1-800-322-2588 or visit [HelpMeGrowWA.org](http://HelpMeGrowWA.org).

### Encourage your baby to move!

Movement like crawling, rolling, and wiggling across the floor builds your baby's brain and muscles. Give your baby plenty of supervised tummy time and play with them on the floor at their eye level.

Put toys just out of reach so your baby can try to move toward them.

Your baby may take longer to crawl or move on their own if they spend a lot of time in play seats, playpens, car seats, strollers, or swings.

### Help your baby fall asleep.

A regular bedtime routine may help your baby settle down more easily. For example, give your baby a bath, change their diaper, play quietly, or read a book. Cuddle your baby and put them in the crib before they get too tired. Your baby may like to suck a pacifier for comfort. If you give your baby a bottle in bed use only water. Other liquids (even formula and human milk) may cause cavities if left in your baby's mouth while sleeping. Do not leave your baby alone with the bottle, in case they may choke.

To help prevent sudden unexpected infant death (SUID), you and everyone who cares for your baby should always put them to sleep on their back.

"Seeing your 6 month old baby exploring the world is a constant reminder of the beauty in simple moments."



# Vaccines



### Vaccines at 6 months:

Vaccines help teach the immune system learn how to defend against germs. When your baby gets a vaccine, it can help build up their natural defenses and protect them from serious illness.

For the earliest and best protection, your baby needs to complete each vaccine series on time.

Your baby may be due for the following recommended vaccines at their 6 month checkup:

- Rotavirus (RV)
- Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (DTaP)
- Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib)

- Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV)
- Hepatitis B (HepB)
- Inactivated polio vaccine (IPV)
- Flu (influenza)
- COVID-19
- Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) (talk with your baby's doctor for more information)

Some babies may need additional vaccines if they have certain medical conditions. Talk to your baby's doctor or nurse if you have questions. Also ask them for an immunization record or a Certificate of Immunization Status if your baby goes to child care. Another way to

see your family's vaccine records online is to sign up for **myirmobile.com**.

### Protect your baby this flu season.

This will be the first flu season your baby can get a flu vaccine. Your baby should get a flu vaccine every flu season from now on. Your baby will need 2 doses spread at least one month apart for the best protection. The vaccine protects your baby throughout flu season. Infants and young children who get the flu are more likely to get very sick and may need to go to the hospital. For the best protection make sure everyone who has contact with your baby gets the flu vaccine.

# Safety

### Baby-proofing prevents injuries.

Baby-proofing your house can reduce the chance of injury, but even with precautions, you or an adult you trust should always be close by watching your baby. Make sure other caregivers babyproof their homes, too.

The image below can help you baby proof your home. Use the numbers in the image to read more in the following list:

- 1. Avoid breaks:** Put breakable things out of reach.
- 2. Put latches on drawers and cupboard doors:** To prevent accidental poisoning, store all cleaners, vitamins, alcohol, medicines and all other chemicals on a high shelf, in a locked closet, or in a cabinet.
- 3. Secure furniture and TVs:** Anchor them to the wall using mounts, brackets, braces, anchors, or wall straps to prevent them from tipping over.

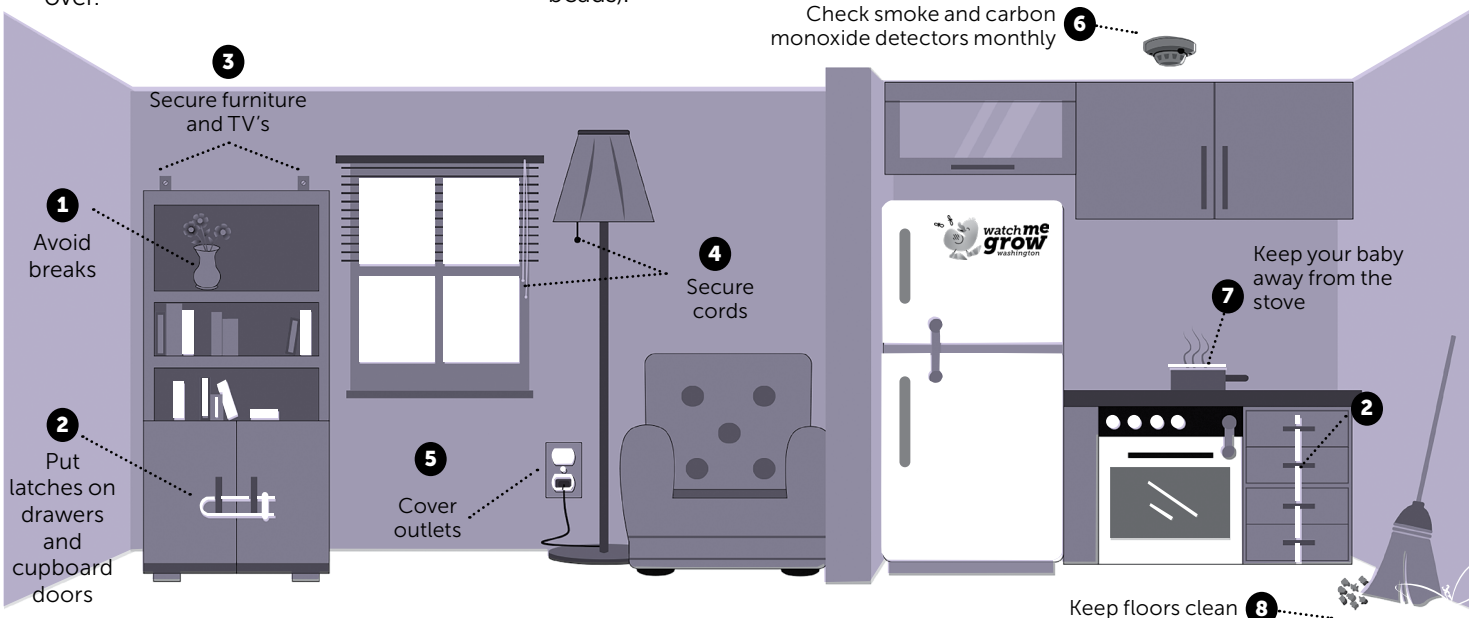
- 4. Secure cords:** Cords, such as those on window shades, and lamps, can strangle babies. Babies can use cords to pull things onto themselves.
- 5. Cover outlets:** To prevent electrical shock install safety plates that cover the whole outlet.
- 6. Check smoke and carbon monoxide detectors:** Make sure you have at least one working smoke detector and one working carbon monoxide detector on each floor of your home. Check them monthly and change the batteries as directed.
- 7. Keep your baby away from the stove:** To avoid burns keep your baby away from the stove, oven, microwave, or other hot surfaces.
- 8. Keep your floors clean:** Your baby is beginning to crawl and roll around. Get down on your hands and knees often to notice things your baby could find or reach. Clean the floor often. Pick up things your baby may try to put in their mouth. Babies can choke on a coin, button, balloon, plastic bag, magnet, battery, pen cap, and small toys (like water beads).

### Other safety tips:

- Always keep at least one hand on your baby when they are on a bed, sofa, or changing table.
- Put safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs. Also put gates in doorways to rooms that are not baby proofed. Keep gates closed and latched.
- Check around baby's crib. Do not hang shelves or anything that could fall onto your baby while they sleep (especially in the event of an earthquake).
- Keep the Washington Poison Center (1-800-222-1222) and other emergency numbers in your phone.

### Baby walkers are dangerous!

Walkers are never safe to use, even with an adult close by. Most walker injuries happen while adults are watching. It's hard for you or your baby's other caregivers to move quickly enough to prevent injuries. A child in a walker can move more than 3 feet in one second! Instead of a walker, try a stationary activity center without wheels and place it away from stairs, hot appliances, and window cords.



### Thanks for reading!

Share this letter with other caregivers in your child's life. You'll hear from us again before your baby is 9 months old with information on:

- Eating together as a family.
- Switching from a bottle to a cup.
- Antibiotic use.
- Safety in the bathtub and in cars.

## 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](http://www.watchmegrowwa.org)



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