

Caring for Your 6-Month-Old Baby

Keep Your Baby Safe

Name _____ Weight _____ Height _____ Date _____

Use a Car Seat

- Install it properly in the back seat facing backwards until your child is 20 pounds.

Use a Safe Crib

- Make sure the space between the slats is less than 2½ inches.
- Don't use a crib with sharp edges that your baby can hit.

Prevent Suffocation

- Put your baby on his back to sleep.
- A string or balloon can choke your baby. Keep strings, balloons and necklaces away from your baby.
- Some toys are small enough or have parts small enough that your baby could choke on them. Don't give your baby toys like these. Give him toys made for his age.

Prevent Injuries

- Don't leave your baby alone—ever. Use extra care when she is in water, near young children or pets, or on any surface from which she could fall.
- Don't use a walker that will let your baby move across the floor. Your baby does not need shoes until she can walk outdoors.
- "Child-proof" your home (see our "Child-Proofing Checklist").
- Set the water heater thermostat so that the water is not hotter than 120°F.
- Make sure you have smoke detectors on your ceiling. Check twice a year to make sure they work.
- Keep your baby away from hot things (like cigarettes or an iron). Don't hold her when you are drinking something hot (like coffee).
- Protect your baby from sunburn. Use sunscreen.
- ***Never shake, toss or hit your baby.***

Provide Healthy Nutrition

- **Breast milk or infant formula is all your baby needs. A healthy baby does not need vitamins. You may give solid foods. Start with iron-fortified rice cereal mixed with breast milk or formula.**
- **If you give other foods to your baby, give only one new food to him every few days. Single foods (like mashed carrots) are better than mixtures (like "chicken dinner"). Don't give your baby honey until he is at least 12 months old. Don't give him foods he might choke on (like nuts, beans, peas, grapes, and pieces of carrot or hot dog).**
- **Feed your baby at least 5 times daily. Avoid nighttime feedings.**
- **Don't prop a bottle in your baby's mouth. Don't put him in the crib with a bottle.**

Practice Healthy Parenting and Care-giving

Care for Yourself

- Make some time for yourself each week by letting someone else care for the baby.

Remember the Family

- Try to set aside special time for other important people in your life.
- Talk with your sex partner about birth control. Ask yourselves, "How many children can we care for?"

Encourage Healthy Development

- Create a schedule for your baby's day and try to keep to it.
- Smile at and play with your baby as much as possible.
- Excite your baby's sense of sight. Show her a sturdy, brightly colored picture book.
- Excite your baby's sense of touch. Let her touch objects with different textures (like soft, hard, glossy or furry).
- Excite your baby's sense of hearing. Talk and sing to her and give her objects that make noise (like a bell or rattle).
- Strengthen your baby and her coordination. Help her push up on her arms while on her belly. Help her sit up in the corner of a couch. Offer her something to pull on.
- **Never yell at your baby.** Keep her safe by moving her away from danger or by removing from her the object that makes you worry.

Deal with Crying

- When your baby cries, ask yourself, "Is my baby hungry? Does he want to be changed? Does he want to be held? Is he too **stimulated** (like from too much touch, noise or light)? Is he in pain (like from teething)? Does he have a fever?"
- Don't feed your baby every time he cries. Don't use a pacifier every time your baby cries. Use it only when you think he needs to calm herself.
- Treat the pain of teething with non-prescription teething medicine applied to the gum or with acetaminophen or ibuprofen.

Sleep

- Place your baby in the crib on her back when she is drowsy but still awake.
- Your baby needs naps and a regular bedtime.
- Don't pick up your baby in the middle of the night. Comfort her with gentle strokes if she cries.

Clean Your Baby

- If your baby boy is uncircumcised, don't try to pull back his foreskin.
- Don't bathe your baby every day. When you do, use warm water and mild baby soap.

Prevent Sickness

Identify It Early

- Learn how to find quickly the Poison Control Center telephone number. It is on the inside cover of the phone book. Keep syrup of ipecac in your home. It is sold at pharmacies.
- Keep your baby away from cigarette smoke. Do not smoke with the baby in the car; do not smoke in the home.
- Call the clinic right away if your baby is coughing a lot or may be dehydrated. Sneezing, watery eyes and a stuffy or runny nose are cold symptoms. A fever is a rectal temperature of 100.4°F or higher. A dehydrated baby has fewer than five wet diapers a day, is much less active than usual, or has dry lips and a pasty mouth.

Your baby's next visit is when he is about 9-months-old. At this check-up we want to see how he is growing and developing. Remember to bring your baby's immunization (shot) record with you.