

PE D I A T R I C S

of Northeastern Pennsylvania

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YOUR SIX MONTH OLD

By now you're really enjoying your baby. The baby is laughing, cooing and very social. Feedings are going well; but watch out, baby is going to be starting to crawl and become mobile. It's time to re-appraise your house from a child's point of view. But first, let's review a few things.

NUTRITION

Remember, no bottles in the crib to aid "baby in falling asleep". This is using the bottle as a pacifier, which discourages self-soothing. Also juice or milk lying on the teeth during sleep increase the incidence of tooth decay. This is the time to begin introducing a cup of water or juice. Meals should be about 2-3 times per day. Cereal, fruits or vegetables may be given. Your child should be taking fluoride supplements or vitamins starting at six months.

SAFETY

Some things never change. Car restraints are still a must! Check your home for all accident hazards, sharp objects, table ledges, medication and household poisons. These last two should be kept out of reach, even better, in locked cabinets. **POISON CONTROL # 1-800-222-1222.**

Get down on your hands and knees and see the world through your child's eyes. Scrutinize all rooms that are accessible to baby. All harmful objects and substances must be removed from these rooms. Protect the baby from hot liquids and surfaces and avoid using appliances with dangling electrical cords that the infant can tug on. Baby can easily pull on table cloths and lamps as they are learning to pull to a stand with disastrous results. Check on drawers that, when pulled out, can fall on the child. **NEVER-EVER** leave a child on a bed, sofa or chair unattended. Remember, walkers offer early mobility with a penalty. You have a very fast moving child and stairs become very dangerous.

Prevent your child from creeping into dangerous or unprotected areas by using gates between rooms, at stairways, etc. The playpen can also be used as an island of safety. Remember, your baby is still vulnerable to jerking or shaking motions. Plastic plugs in electrical outlets and electrical tape to insulate the junction points of extension cords are a must. Keep plastic wrappers, plastic bags and balloons out of the baby's reach and **NEVER-EVER** leave a baby unattended in a tub of water.

SEPARATION ANXIETY

Feeling of loss and sadness at being separated from a loved one are a fact of life and a normal part of development.

Childhood separation feelings have two components. The fear of being apart from the parent and the prospect of facing a new environment or situation. These feelings develop gradually. In the first three months an infant can only understand whether or not their needs are being met, but about 4-5 months of age they begin to associate satisfaction of these needs with their parents and realize that you are actually not a part of their own body. By six months, you are a very special person to them and a strong attachment has formed.

At 7-9 months when separation anxiety typically begins, your absence, no matter how short, may be frightening, because the child doesn't yet understand that you, the provider of all his needs, will in fact return. Many babies turn their frustration against the person who temporarily steps into the parents shoes. Accept

your infants protest and your occasional leave-taking as a normal sign of love. You may be able to ease their fears by regularly introducing them to new people and activities. Hiding games such as peek-a-boo, let them know that you will return.

SEPARATION ANXIETY (CONT.)

Infants may show a resistance to going to sleep due to separation anxiety also. If this happens, the use of a favorite toy or possession, such as a stuffed toy or blanket, can be used as a transitional object to help act as a "security" or comfort measure. It's not unusual for the child to wake during the night at this age also.

It's important to realize that separation feelings are a two-way street between the parent and the child. Adults feel the pangs as well, and a child may pick up on your unwillingness to leave them or your fear of their growing up. Try to notice if you're over-reacting to every-day separation. Examine your own feelings of guilt about leaving the child. The ways in which your child learns to accept separation and move ahead to new challenges, is molded to an extent by both parents experiences with separation feelings and will last for a child's lifetime.

PLAY

As a parent, encourage play with other toys in addition to the child's favorite toys or possessions. Parent-child interaction is very important. In fact, Mom and Dad are the best toys for baby. Parents and child should play games with each other. Include siblings whenever possible.

EXTRA!! EXTRA!!

- You can stimulate the child's speech by talking to them and responding to their sounds.
- Changing diapers becomes a feat about now. Babies are very wiry and move all the time.
- Distract the child with a toy, not the powder container.
- Teething may be beginning.
- Baby still does not need shoes.
- Fluoride supplements are necessary.

IMMUNIZATIONS

Refer to immunization chart in baby book for immunizations due.

Immunizations and their schedules change according to the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations. Check with your physician for changes/updates.

DEVELOPMENT

Motor

Turns head freely, rolls from back to stomach, bears weight on legs, sits with slight support.
Begins to transfer objects from hand to hand, can hold bottle; manipulates objects and puts everything in mouth.

Language

Vowels begin to be mixed with more consonants, varies pitch, volume and rate of speech utterances, vocalizes pleasure and displeasure, grunts, growls or complains, coos, gurgles with pleasure, squeals with excitement, giggles, big belly laughs

Mental

Turns head to human sounds or sounds of objects out of sight. Alert two hours at a stretch. Reaches for things he sees quickly and without jerks. Inspects objects at length, senses the relationship between hands and the objects they manipulate.

Social

Smiles at mirror image, differentiates self from mirror image, is aware of separate parts of self. Tries to imitate facial expressions.

Disturbed by strangers, distinguishes adults from children, calls parents for help. Prefers to play with people.

Begins to show interest in finger - feeding self.

Sleeps through the night, sleeps about 1/2 of a 24-hour period.

- * An important reminder, these milestones are guidelines only. All babies do not develop at the same speed, nor do they spend the same amount of time at each stage of their development. Usually a baby is ahead in some areas, behind in others. The descriptions you found in this handout and will find in future handouts is for a "typical" child. The concept of the "typical" child describes the characteristics one would expect to find at a given age. If, however, you have concerns regarding your child's development, please discuss them with the Doctor.

Please call our office between 7:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. with ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS. That's what OUR part of YOUR team is all about!