



Parenting the First Year

MONTH

6-7

How baby is changing

Teething often begins during the sixth month. Baby may drool more than usual and be uncomfortable and fussy. Teething rings can soothe sore gums. Try rings that are cold or warm, smooth or bumpy, and different shapes.

Your baby may be able to roll from his stomach to his back and then over to his stomach again, with a rest in between. Some babies can cross a room this way.

Baby's legs are strengthening. He probably loves to stand up, while you hold him under his arms. He may bounce up and down. These exercises help his legs prepare for crawling and walking.

Some babies will begin learning to sit up. Be sure he has soft surfaces to fall on. Keep an eye on him; he may get stuck in an uncomfortable position.

Is your baby showing more fear of strangers? This is a good sign. It means he can tell people he knows from people he doesn't.

Hold your baby when he meets people. Let him get used to them slowly, especially child care providers. Or you could have the new person hand him a favorite toy.

For single parents

If you are tired, lack time for yourself, and feel overburdened, then you are a pretty normal single parent!

All parents need support to help them through these challenging first years. You are not alone. Over 1/4 of U.S. children live with a single parent. There are single-parent support groups, in which parents meet to share experiences, make new friendships, and share parenting ideas. Look in the phone book or ask at your local clinic, church, or community center. The "Parents Without Partners" website (www.parentswithoutpartners.org) provides resources for single parents.

Set aside time each week for what you like to do. You have your own needs, apart from those of your child. When you care for yourself, you are able to take the best care of your baby!

Changing child care

There are many reasons to change your child care provider. You may find one that is of higher quality or that is more convenient. What will your baby think about the change?

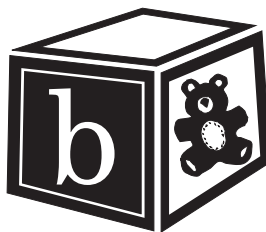
Babies need more regularity and sameness in their lives than the rest of us do, especially when it comes to the people who meet their everyday needs.

A baby needs to trust the people she counts on. This trust is the basis for good relationships later. Your baby will form this trust with you and others who meet her needs, including child care providers.

This is important: Baby needs to feel secure in every place she spends time.

When baby has many different child care providers, she may have a hard time forming close bonds. She needs a provider who will care for her needs quickly and sensitively, someone she will learn to trust.

So try to find a provider who enjoys your baby and will be available regularly. If you need to change providers for a good reason, that's OK. Baby will adjust. But try to limit the changes.



Children can be very different from each other. Don't worry if your child is "early" or "late" in growth. **This is important:** Look for and notice your child's growth in each area. Then you can encourage each new ability.

Babies love babies.

When you are around town, you will meet other parents with their babies. Notice how much the babies like to look at each other. Babies really like other babies.

Make a date to meet another parent and baby at the park or at your home. Make it a fun time. See what the babies will do with each other.

It's great to watch another parent and baby together. You can learn a lot just by watching, and they learn from you. Sometimes it's just fun to laugh together about the good times and the hard times with a baby!

Your baby wants you to know:

How I grow:

- ♥ I turn and twist in all directions.
- ♥ I sometimes sit up for several minutes.
- ♥ I creep backwards and forwards with my stomach on the floor.
- ♥ I hold onto an object with one hand, and then put it in the other hand.
- ♥ I hold one building block, reach for a second one, and look for a third one right away.
- ♥ I grab for an object when it drops.

How I talk:

- ♥ I still babble a lot, but I have more control of sounds.
- ♥ I may begin to understand some words by your tone of voice.

How I respond:

- ♥ I pick up things, shake them, and then listen to the sound they make when I drop them.
- ♥ I play games with people I know.
- ♥ I get upset when I'm around grown-up strangers, but I'm friendly to children I don't know.
- ♥ I coo, hum, or stop crying sometimes when I hear music.
- ♥ I keep very busy doing something all the time.

How I understand:

- ♥ I know that I have to use my hands to pick up something.
- ♥ I look at and study things for a long time.
- ♥ I turn objects upside down just to get another view of them.
- ♥ I turn when I hear my name.
- ♥ I may have one favorite toy or blanket.

How I feel:

- ♥ I haven't learned how to control my feelings yet.
- ♥ I complain and howl when I don't get my way.
- ♥ I giggle, coo, and squeal with joy when I'm happy.
- ♥ I may develop likes and dislikes about food.

How you can help me learn:

- ♥ Take me to see other babies.
- ♥ Blow soap bubbles for me to watch on a sunny day.
- ♥ Give me things to play with that make noise. A crinkly paper bag or some blocks I can bang together are great.
- ♥ Float a toy in my bathtub for me to play with. I'd like something to pour water out of, too.
- ♥ Read nursery rhymes and stories to me. Sing me lullabies.

Child guidance: Discipline is teaching.

Babies this age cannot obey or disobey parents. Their minds are not developed enough for them to know right from wrong. However, they may do things that are unsafe or that you think are wrong.

For the next year or so, parents need to help infants learn how to behave. Discipline really means **teaching**, not punishing.

If you are a warm and loving parent, your baby will learn to trust you. The more baby trusts you, the more easily she will accept the occasional limits you set. She will want to do the right thing to please you. Research with older children shows that discipline works best for parents who have a warm relationship with the child.

Here are some ways to teach your baby what is acceptable:

- ♥ **Praise your baby** when she does things you like. Infants like adult attention, such as words, hugs, or smiles. The more positive you are when baby is good, the more she will tend to listen when you disapprove.
- ♥ **Ignore misbehavior** — such as spitting food — if it is not harmful. Don't look at, smile at, or scold the baby. Until she stops, pretend she isn't there.
- ♥ **Pick the baby up and move her to something safe** if she is doing something dangerous. For example, take baby away from a stairway, put her in the middle of the room, and say: "You can crawl here." This is **redirecting**.
- ♥ **Remember to praise your baby** for doing something that is OK after you have ignored or redirected her.
- ♥ **Baby-proof your home** so your baby has safe places to explore and move around. A curious baby won't learn very much in a playpen. See *Parenting the First Year, Month 5-6*.
- ♥ Good parents try to **prevent** problems. If your baby gets into trouble, there may be some things you could do to prevent problems until she learns to control her behavior. For example, put a gate on the stairs. Move the vase to a higher shelf.
- ♥ **Make your baby's world interesting.** If she has fun things to explore, she will be too busy to get into trouble. For example, when you visit another house, take interesting toys to hold her attention.
- ♥ **Teach your baby to do things right.** If she pulls the cat's hair or yours, show her how to pet gently.

Children learn by watching parents

When raising their children, many parents either do what their parents did or do just the opposite. Have you thought about why you copy some things and reject others?

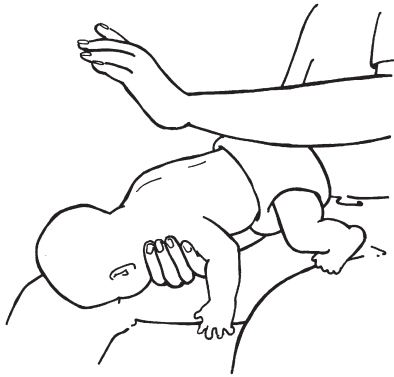
Even though your baby is only 6 months old, she is learning from your example. That is why it is so important to think about the examples and patterns you set, even at this early age.

Some patterns that influence your child's life are:

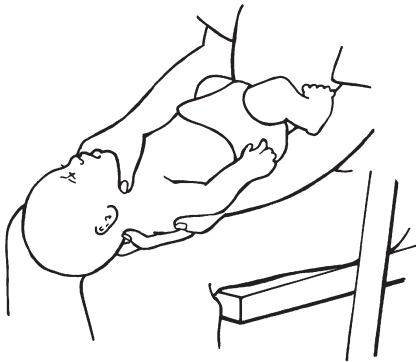
- ♥ How you talk to each other
- ♥ How you work out your problems
- ♥ How you show your feelings

Remember, you are the most important influence in your baby's life.





Five back blows with heel of hand.



Turn baby over between your hands.



Five pushes on the chest with two fingertips.

First aid for infant choking

You may see an infant choke on food. Or you may suspect choking if an infant collapses while eating or putting things into her mouth.

Signs of breathing difficulty are: wheezing, gasping, choking, and grasping the throat.

An infant with a completely blocked airway **cannot breathe, cough, or cry.**

If the airway is almost completely blocked, there are high-pitched noises when inhaling, great difficulty breathing, and very weak or no coughing. First aid is the same for a completely blocked airway and an almost completely blocked airway.

The basic steps for removing an object from the airway of an infant are back blows and chest thrusts. **DO NOT do this if baby can breathe, cough, or cry.**

Back blows — Lay the baby on top of your arm, with her head lower than her chest. Support baby's head with your hand around the jaw and under the chest. Rest your arm on your thigh. Give five blows rapidly between the shoulder blades with the heel of your hand. Then turn the infant over.

Turning the infant over — Place your free hand on baby's back, and sandwich the child between your hands and arms. One hand holds the chest, neck, and jaw while the other hand holds the back, neck, and head. Holding her between your hands and arms, turn her face up. Rest your arm on your thigh, so her head is lower than her chest.

Chest thrusts — Push on the chest five times with your fingertips on the sternum (breastbone). Your fingertips should be one finger width below an imaginary line between the baby's nipples. Your hand should come in from the side, as shown here, so that your fingertips run up and down the sternum.

If the baby is still choking, repeat back blows and chest thrusts, and call for help.

Learning first aid

The American Red Cross and the American Heart Association teach parents and other concerned adults what to do if people of any age start choking, stop breathing, or need CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation).

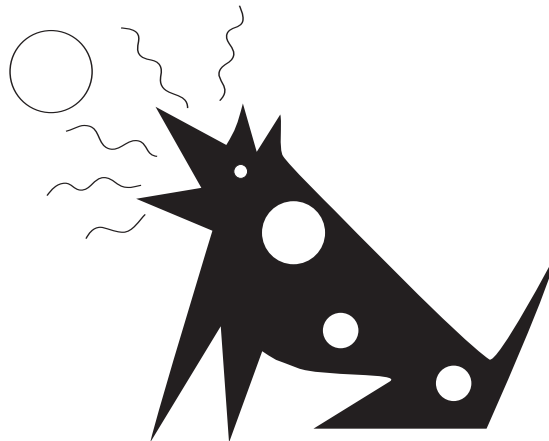
Brain death from lack of oxygen can begin in just 4 minutes. Ambulances often take longer to arrive.

The instructions on this page **are not a substitute** for taking a class and practicing the techniques.

For more information on learning what to do if your infant's breathing or heart stops, call your local American Red Cross chapter or Heart Association office.

Hearing checklist

Age	Question	Behavior
3-6 months	What does baby do when you talk to him?	Awakens or quiets to sound of parent's voice.
	How does baby react to your voice when he can't see you?	Typically turns eyes and head toward the source of sound.
	What does baby do when you drop a saucepan behind him?	Shows signs of being startled.
7-10 months	When baby can't see, how does he react to: familiar footsteps... the dog barking... the phone ringing... someone's voice... his own name?	Turns head and shoulders toward sounds even when he can't see what's happening. Such sounds do not have to be loud to cause a response.
11-15 months	Can baby point to or find familiar objects or people when asked to? Examples: "Where is Jimmy?" "Find the ball."	Shows understanding of some words by behavior. For example, points to or looks at familiar objects or people on request.
	Does baby respond differently to different sounds?	Jabbers in response to a human voice, is apt to cry when there is thunder, and may frown when scolded.
	Does baby enjoy listening to some sounds and imitating them?	Imitation means that baby can hear sounds and match them.



Baby's hearing

Much of baby's first year is spent learning **how** to listen. Through listening, your infant learns about the world, makes sounds, and learns to talk.

Doctors can now check even a newborn's hearing. If you suspect your child has a hearing problem, tell your doctor right away.

A hearing problem interferes with a baby's ability to communicate and to learn.

A lot of language learning happens in the first 5 years, so it is very important to treat problems early. Don't wait until your child begins school.

The checklist shown here will help you follow your child's progress. It lists how children should behave at different age levels.

But remember, a tired, hungry, or sleepy baby may not respond the way he would if he were awake and content.

Car safety seat

Many babies outgrow their infant car safety seat when they reach about 20 pounds. Check the weight and height limits on your car seat.

You will need a convertible car seat next. Baby can ride in it facing backwards until at least age 1 or until he reaches the maximum weight or height allowed by the car seat maker. This can prevent neck injury in a crash.

After age 1, you can turn the seat to face forward. It should last until your child reaches 40 pounds or about age 4. Check the weight limits printed on the seat.

Planning baby's meals

Most babies are ready for three meals a day plus snacks after 6 months of age. But if you are breastfeeding, we recommend you continue this also for the whole first year or longer.

If your baby has been introduced to eating baby cereal and puréed vegetables, you can start giving him some soft mashed fruits such as bananas, peaches, apricots, prunes, plums pears, or apple sauce. You may also mash canned fruits packed in juice or light syrup. Start out slowly — one new mashed fruit at a time — as you did for cereals and vegetables.

After your baby is 6 months old, you can start giving him juice in a cup. Limit juice to about 4 ounces (½ cup) per day.

Does baby need fluoride?

When your baby is about 6 months old, she may need extra fluoride to help prevent cavities. Some babies don't need fluoride because their infant formula is prepared with tap water that contains fluoride. Ask your doctor or health care professional for advice on fluoride supplements.

Building good food habits

Did you ever stop to think why you don't like some foods?

Food habits are usually formed during childhood. If a variety of foods is offered in the early years, most children will eat a variety of foods throughout life.

Children copy their parents, brothers, and sisters. If your baby sees her family eating healthy foods, she probably will, too.

Ways to help your baby develop good eating habits

- ♥ **Provide a pleasant, relaxed meal time.**
- ♥ **Feed her with the rest of the family, even though she's still eating baby food.** Baby will feel like she belongs and can see family members eating different foods.
- ♥ **Feed her as much as she wants to eat but don't force her to eat more than she wants.** Your baby's appetite will vary from day to day. Avoid making meals a battleground.
- ♥ **Give her a variety of foods.** She may be eating baby cereal and pureed or mashed vegetables by now and may be ready for soft fruits and apple or pear juice.
- ♥ **Serve foods that are right for baby's age.** Some foods, often fed to older children, are not appropriate for babies, such as pizza, hot dogs, french fried potatoes, or dishes made from a mixture of foods and condiments such as casseroles. These foods tend to be high in salt and contain a mixture of ingredients that a baby may not have tried before and, thus, may have a reaction to.
- ♥ **Avoid sweets.** Sweetened foods may fill up baby without providing essential nutrients. Therefore, avoid feeding baby commercially prepared baby food desserts, cakes, cookies, candies, and sweet pastries. Do not add sugar, glucose, molasses, maple syrup, corn syrup, or other syrups to baby's food or beverages.

Fathers are changing.

Many men today are different kinds of fathers than their fathers.

Today, more fathers are taking an active role in raising their children. These fathers play with their baby, feed and change the baby, and form a warm, nurturing bond with baby.

Research shows that the more a father is involved, the better a child develops. This holds for uncles, grandfathers, and other adult males, too, especially when no father is present.

Some men feel awkward caring for a baby at first. But they learn quickly, and they report enjoying it. They like the feeling of a little one depending on them, smiling at them, or falling asleep on their chest.

Learning about emotions

Parents want to raise children who are responsible and moral. To accomplish this, you can teach baby how to recognize his own and others' emotions. Here are ways to help baby learn:

- ♥ Pay attention to your baby's emotions. How is he feeling?
- ♥ Name the emotion. Tell baby when he seems happy, angry, afraid, frustrated, etc.
- ♥ Be sympathetic when baby experiences negative emotions. Let your baby know you understand why he feels this way. You might say, "You seem frustrated because you can't climb the stairs, and you really want to. But you can crawl in the living room."

Parents may fear that discussing negative emotions may make their baby grow up to be unhappy. In reality, children who learn about emotions are better able to calm themselves and cope with their negative feelings.

By talking about emotions with your baby now, you will set the pattern for emotion teaching in the future.



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