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SIX MONTH WELL CHILD CHECK



NAME: _____

WEIGHT: _____ HEIGHT: _____ HEAD SIZE: _____

Feelings: Many 6-month-olds have what is called “stranger anxiety”. At 4 months most babies smile at everybody, but at 6 months many babies stare solemnly at strangers for many minutes before finally warming up and giving them a shy smile. Some 6-month-olds will cry if strangers come too close--a behavior that can be hard on grandparents coming to visit. Allow your baby time to get used to “strangers”. Reassure grandparents that their grandchild’s response is a developmental stage, not rejection.

Along with stranger anxiety, many 6-month-olds have “separation anxiety”. It’s not unusual for the mother of a 6-month-old to say, “I’ve really spoiled her... I can’t put her down without her crying.” Six month old babies aren’t spoiled; they just don’t know that if their mom is out of their sight she still exists. That’s why 6-month-olds cry when their moms leave the room, or give them to someone else to hold. Peek-a-boo games will help your 6-month-old get over separation anxiety as he learns that if you disappear from sight, you will return.

Sleep: Separation anxiety can also affect a 6-month-old’s sleep. Parents of 6-month-olds frequently tell us: “My baby used to sleep all night, but now is waking every 2 to 3 hours”. This 6-month-old waking is often triggered by separation anxiety. Babies dream every few hours throughout the night. Often when 6-month-olds are dreaming they begin to awaken. As they notice their parent isn’t there with them, they cry. As soon as the parent comes to them, they calm down and can quickly return to sleep. Mothers often say that they’ll put the baby to the breast, thinking the baby is hungry and the baby is back to sleep after only a few sucks. The baby’s night waking/separation anxiety is easily relieved, by the presence of a parent, but getting up every 2 to 3 hours is exhausting for the parent. If your baby has begun to wake frequently, try not going in right away. If you wait 10 minutes before responding, your baby may learn to fall back asleep without your help just as you do after waking from a dream.

Feeding: Six months is a good time to start offering your baby food. Some babies eat food well right from the start. Others don’t show much interest until they are 7, 8 or even 9 months old. Be patient if your baby isn’t interested in solids now, offer them again in a week. There’s no rush. Babies eat when they’re ready to.

Feed your baby in an upright sitting position, facing you. Start by offering rice cereal mixed with breast milk or formula to a thin consistency. If your baby’s ready to eat, your baby will open his mouth when he sees the spoon. At first just put some cereal on his lips. If he draws the cereal into his mouth and swallows, then offer another spoonful. If he again opens his mouth put more on his lips, but if he turns his head don’t offer more. Let your baby determine how much and how fast he wants to eat Watch your baby’s nonverbal signs: an open mouth means “More, please”; closed lips and a turned head mean “I’ve had enough.” Stop feeding as soon as your baby shows you he’s had enough.

As your baby gets better at eating, gradually thicken the cereal. Once your baby is eating somewhat lumpy cereal twice a day, then begin offering fruits or vegetables that have been cooked and then mashed with a fork or put through a baby food grinder or, if you prefer, use commercial baby food. Don’t mix the fruit or vegetable with the cereal because you want your baby to learn to accept new tastes. Take your time adding new foods, so your baby has a chance to get used to different tastes and textures. Let your baby touch and finger foods. It’s messy but that’s how he learns about how things feel. By the time your baby is around 9 months old he maybe having 3 meals a day: cereal and fruit for breakfast, fruit and vegetables for lunch, and cereal and vegetables for dinner. A baby serving size is about 1 to 2 tablespoons but let him decide how much he wants.

** Continued from front*



If your baby wants to feed himself with his fingers, let him. You'll know your baby is ready for finger foods when he is able to eat lumpy cereal. Good first finger foods are any foods that hold together long enough to make it from the tray of the high chair to your baby's mouth. Mashed potatoes are great first finger foods. As your baby gets better and better at picking things up and bringing them to his mouth, you can offer finger foods that pass the "squish" test. If you can squish the food easily between your fingers, then your baby can mash it between his gums. Start by squishing the food for him first and then let him pick up the squished pieces and feed himself. Good foods to squish are small pieces of soft cooked vegetables like carrots or peas, or cut up pasta casseroles. Crackers, cheerios and bites of bread might come next.



Your baby may gag when he stuffs too much in his mouth, but that's how he learns to judge how much is the right amount to put in his mouth. Make sure the pieces you offer are small squish-able pieces and he'll be okay. You don't have to instantly grab him from the high chair, but watch and allow him to handle it himself as long as he's not truly choking.

Remember to talk to your baby while feeding him. Feeding should be fun for both of you, and early on your baby will learn that meal times are also social times, a time for the family to be together.

Your 6 month old should continue to drink breast milk or formula.

