

# Just in Time Parenting

## Children Learn From Watching Parents

When raising their children, many parents either do the things their own parents did, or they do just the opposite. What do you copy from your parents? What do you do that is different? Have you thought about why you copy some things and not others?

Even though your baby is only 6 months old, he is learning by watching you. That is why it is so important to set a good example. Your baby will copy what family members do. Once set, patterns of family life are hard to change.

### Your baby will notice:

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

Talk to others with kindness and tell them what you really mean to say.

Work out problems by talking about them and finding positive solutions.



## Your Baby Is Half a Year Old!

Now that your baby has reached the half-year mark, she is probably spending most of her awake time sitting up, playing, babbling, looking around, and touching everything.

Your baby may be driving you a little crazy because she wants to

grab everything she sees. Try to be patient; she is learning about the world.

So far we have talked about how your baby grows each month. But another person has also grown—YOU. Congratulations—Keep up the good work!

Show love and concern for family members, but also tell them when you are angry or upset so the issue can be resolved before it becomes a big problem.

Remember, you are the most important influence in your children's lives. How you act teaches them how to behave.

# What's It Like to Be 6 Months Old?



## How I Grow and Talk

- I turn and twist in all directions.
- I roll from my back to my stomach.
- I sometimes can sit up without the support of my arms.
- I creep backward and forward 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.
- I still babble a lot, but I have more control of sounds.
- I'm beginning to understand some words by the tone of voice you use.

## 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 and Feel

- 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 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 have very strong likes and dislikes about food.

## Discipline Is Teaching

Six month old babies don't understand what it means to obey you. Their minds are not developed enough for them to know right from wrong. However, they may do things that are not safe or things that you think are wrong.

For the next year or so, you need to help your baby learn how to behave, which is sometimes called discipline. Discipline really means teaching, not punishing.

If you are a warm and loving parent, your baby will learn to trust you. The more your baby trusts you, the more she will accept the limits you put on her. She will want to do the right thing to please you.

Research shows that discipline works best for parents who have a warm relationship with their children.

### **Here are some good ways to teach your baby:**

Let your baby know when she does things you like with words, hugs, and smiles. The more positive you are when your baby is good, the more she will listen to you when you don't

like what she's doing.

Ignore misbehavior, such as spitting food, if it's not harming anyone. Don't look at her, smile, or yell. Until she stops, pretend you don't see her.



Pick your baby up and move her to safety if she is doing something dangerous. For example, take her away from a stairway and 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 misbehavior or redirected her.

Baby proof your home so your baby has safe places to explore and move around. For example, leave one low kitchen cabinet unlocked and stock it with safe plastic dishes. Have baby toys on low safe shelves that she can reach.

Prevent problems before they happen. For example, put a safety gate on the stairs to prevent falls. Put a vase away or on a very high shelf out of your baby's reach.

Make your baby's world interesting. If she has fun things to explore, she will be too busy having safe fun to get into trouble. For example, when you visit someone else's home, take interesting toys to hold her attention. This way she won't get into dangerous things at the other home.

Teach your baby to do things right. If she pulls the cat's hair or yours, show her how to pat the cat or you gently.



## When Your Doctor Says It Is Time to Start Solids

Most doctors recommend that parents wait until their baby is 6 months old to start solid foods. Until that time, babies can't control their mouths and tongues very well so they may push food out of their mouths instead of eating it.

When you decide to feed your baby solid food, choose the right moment. Try it when your baby is rested, when she is hungry but not starved, and when you are relaxed.

The first solid food to give your baby is often an iron-fortified cereal in addition to breast milk or infant formula. Choose a baby cereal with just one ingredient such as just rice (least likely to cause allergies), only oatmeal, or just barley. Put a teaspoon of baby cereal in a dish and mix it with breast milk or formula to a watery consistency. Don't add sugar or salt or any other seasoning. For the first few weeks, offer the cereal once or twice a day after the breast or bottle feeding.



Use a small, narrow spoon. Put a small amount of cereal toward the middle of your baby's tongue. If she seems interested, give her a few more tastes with the spoon. If she doesn't like it, or pushes the spoon away, wait a few weeks and try again.

The first feedings will be messy. Your baby has been used to sucking liquids. Now, she has to learn how to swallow solids. The tongue thrust that makes food come back out is a natural reaction. Your baby has to learn to swallow rather than push her tongue out.

The next foods after cereals will probably be a few teaspoons of pureed vegetables or fruits.

But wait until your doctor tells you to give them a try.

Try only one new food at a time. If you start with a few teaspoons of infant rice cereal, keep giving your baby just the rice cereal for a week or so. The reason you try only one food at a time is so you can see if your baby has a reaction to



a food or is allergic to it. So, see if your baby has an allergy to rice cereal before you start infant oatmeal or infant barley.

Sometimes a new food can cause diarrhea, a skin rash, or even a runny nose. If you think your baby has an allergy problem, check with your doctor, nurse, or clinic.

You can help your baby learn to eat healthy foods. Try to make eating a pleasant time.



### 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 do like other babies.



## Watch Out! High Chair Safety

When your baby starts to lean forward out of his infant seat and you're afraid he will tip over, it's time for a high chair. Remember, though, babies can get badly hurt in a high chair if you don't follow safety rules.

### Here are some things to look for to be sure the high chair is safe for your baby:

- It should be sturdy, with a wide base so it won't tip over.
- A seat belt with a crotch strap to go between your baby's legs keeps him from sliding out and is a must.
- The tray should lock securely on both sides and have no sharp edges.
- Belt buckles and tray locks should be easy for you to use but NOT easy for your baby to use.
- Caps or plugs on tubing should be firmly attached and unable to be pulled off. They could cause a child to choke.
- It should be easy to clean. If the finish will allow, you can place the high chair in the shower stall to soak and steam it clean.
- If the seat is slippery, attach rubber bathtub adhesive stickers to the seat so your baby doesn't slide around.

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 from just watching, and they can learn from you, too.

## DO's and DON'T's of High Chair Safety

**DO** always use the seat belt and strap.

**DO** lock the tray into place.

**DO** be sure your baby's hands are out of the way when you lock the tray.

**DO** be sure that there are no sharp edges to cut her or you.

**DO** keep the high chair at least 12 inches away from a table or counter. Your baby could push off and tip over.

**DO** watch your baby closely. Some babies have slipped down between the leg straps and strangled.

**DON'T** leave the chair near a stove.

**DON'T** leave your baby alone in the chair.

**DON'T** let your baby stand in the chair.

**DON'T** let other children climb on the chair.

## Fathers Are Changing

Today, many fathers are quite involved in raising their children. These fathers play with their babies, feed and change their babies, and create a warm close relationship with them.

More mothers work outside the home than in the past, so dads are taking on the responsibility of doing more in-home work, including caring for their children. By taking care of their children each day, fathers have a chance to form a strong, close bond with them.

Dads create that close bond with their babies by giving them some special time each day. By focusing on just their baby and nothing else, dads are telling their children that they are important.



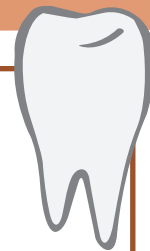
## Baby's First Tooth

Some babies are born with one or more teeth; others do not get teeth until after their first birthday. Because the average age for the first tooth is 7 months old, your baby may begin teething soon.

Your baby's first teeth will probably come in easily. She may have slightly inflamed gums, some drooling, and quite a bit of chewing as the first teeth come through. To comfort your baby, rub her gums with your clean finger or give her a cool safe teething ring she can chew.

When teething, your baby may have a runny nose or a rash on her face and neck. She also

## Take Care of Baby Teeth



**Baby teeth do five important things:**

- Chew food
- Help child speak clearly
- Guide permanent teeth into place
- Add to general good health
- Make a nice smile

Tooth decay is a serious problem for young children. Half of American children have cavities by the time they are 2 years old.

Cavities are caused when sugars in breast milk, formula, sweetened drinks, and juices are on the baby's teeth for long periods of time. This often happens if a baby sleeps with a bottle in his mouth or stays attached to the breast and goes to sleep.

may be fussy. Teething does not cause high fever above 101 degrees, vomiting, or diarrhea. If your baby has these symptoms, call your doctor.

After teething, the first tooth is a welcome sight. By the time your child is 2 to 3 years old, all 20 baby teeth should be in. Many people believe that if children lose their baby teeth, the teeth are not important. This is not true. See the story above for reasons baby teeth must be protected.



## Safety Alert for Parents and Caregivers: Childproof Your Home

It's time to childproof your home. Your baby is getting around more now and can get into things that are dangerous.

Look everywhere for small items your baby could choke on and remove them. This may be hard if you have older children who have toys with tiny parts, but it's important.

Remove things that could smother your baby, like pillows and soft bedding from the crib. Put plastic bags where your baby can't reach them.

Prevent burns by turning pot handles toward the back of the stove. Turn

your water heater down to 120 degrees. Lock up matches and lighters. Put knives and sharp scissors out of reach.

Put medicines, cosmetics, cleaning agents, and anything poisonous in a locked cabinet. Put safety gates at the top and the bottom of the stairs.

Make sure the paint and furniture in your house is nontoxic. Some of your furniture may have been painted with lead paint. Remove poisonous houseplants. Consult the Consumer Product Safety Commission <http://www.cpsc.gov> for more information to keep your baby from being accidentally poisoned.



### Games Babies Play

#### Get What You Want: Using a Tool Game

**Purpose of game:** Encourage your baby to use objects as tools for getting what he wants.

**How to play:** Put your baby in a sitting position on the floor with a small blanket in front of him. Make sure he can reach the blanket. Sit beside him.

Put a favorite toy on the blanket, but place it out of reach. If your baby does not pull the blanket to get the toy, pull the blanket toward him until he can reach the toy. Use action words to describe what he is doing, such as "See, you got the ball by pulling the blanket." You can use towels, potholders, or pillows instead of a blanket.

Play the game with another toy to see if your baby learns to pull the blanket to get what he wants. Stop if he gets tired or fussy.

## Your Baby May Wake at Night

It is common for babies who have been sleeping through the night to begin waking up at night. Reasons for this might be the baby wants to play; he might not feel well, or it may just be the development of a new sleep cycle and behavior.

Unless your baby is in pain, it's best for your baby to learn to comfort himself to get back to sleep. Leave him alone for a few minutes to see if this happens. If it doesn't, comfort the baby and tell him it's time to go to sleep. He may cry a little and that is OK. If the baby cries for more than 15 minutes, go back in to comfort him.

## Want to Learn More?

For an online version of this newsletter go to [www.extension.org](http://www.extension.org) and choose parenting.

If you have questions, contact your local Extension office.

When reading this newsletter, remember: Every baby is different. Children may do things earlier or later than described here. This newsletter gives equal space and time to both sexes. If he or she is used, we are talking about all babies.

Credits: This newsletter was adapted from Extension Just In Time Parenting Newsletters in California, Delaware, Georgia, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Tennessee, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, and Wisconsin.

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