

CORINTH FAMILY MEDICINE & PEDIATRICS

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6 MONTH WELL EXAM

NUTRITION:

Most infants will want to eat every 3-4 hrs at this age. Formula fed infants usually take between 6-8 oz per feeding and consume a total of 24-35 oz per 24 hrs. This is the perfect time to introduce or proceed to more solid foods. If just starting out, we recommend plain iron-fortified rice cereal which can be mixed with formula, breast milk or water. Your baby can take all baby food by a spoon at this age; it may take 3-4 days for them to get the hang of pushing it back with their tongue so that more goes down than comes back out! After 2 wks on rice cereal, you can begin adding veggies as a second meal a day. Only offer a new food once every 4-5 days so that you can tell if your infant has a reaction to a particular food. The only foods to be avoided are honey or hard chunks of food that could cause choking. Newer studies have shown that waiting to introduce certain foods associated with allergies, such as eggs, dairy, soy, peanuts, or fish, does not prevent food allergies. Most 6-month-olds will want baby food 2-3 times a day. You may notice them taking less formula or breast milk, and that is fine. Continue formula or breast milk until 1 yr of age (no cow's milk).

SLEEP:

Sleep patterns generally become more predictable by 6 months, and most infants will have an 8-10 hr stretch between night feedings. Infants at this age should be placed in the crib while sleepy but still awake, so they can learn to settle themselves to sleep. Some previously good sleepers start to wake at night at this age; allow your infant to self soothe at that time and learn how to fall back asleep without you. Do not allow your child to sleep with you or in your bed. There should be NO loose bedding, blankets, stuffed animals, bumpers, positioners, or other objects in bed with your infant. Be sure to lower the crib mattress to the lowest setting.

BLADDER AND BOWEL FUNCTION:

Bowel patterns can change dramatically in frequency, color, smell and consistency with the introduction of baby foods. Ignore color changes (unless blood is seen). Again, a stool once every 3-4 days is okay as long as it is not hard pebbles or formed more than peanut butter in consistency. If stools are becoming too firm, you may add a 4oz bottle of 50% diluted apple or prune juice each day or 2 teaspoons of dark kayro syrup to 4 oz water once or twice a day.

DEVELOPMENT:

Around 6 months, your infant should be smiling, cooing, laughing out loud, beginning to babble with single consonant sounds, trying to reach for everything within arms length, bringing objects to their mouth, trying to sit up with help, and trying to roll over both ways. Often they will transfer objects between hands. This is the age that your infant may develop "stranger awareness" or "stranger anxiety" as their minds begin to realize that not every friendly face is Mom or Dad. Your baby may start teething soon; this can lead to irritability, *occasional* low grade temperature (no more than 101°F), drooling, and a desire to chew on something hard. Teething rings made of firm rubber (not frozen) can be helpful. Avoid using teething tablets containing belladonna and numbing gels containing benzocaine.

SAFETY:

- Always use an approved, rear-facing infant car seat.
- Do not leave your infant unattended on a bed, couch, changing table, etc.
- Childproof your home! Infants become increasingly more mobile at this age. You should get down on the floor and recognize everything that is going to catch your infant's eye. Watch for choking hazards such as small objects, balloons, or plastic bags. Remove dangling electrical cords and blinds/drapery cords from you infant's reach. Avoid placing cups of hot liquids near the edges of tables. Beware that your infant may begin getting into cabinets and bottom drawers by 7-9 months of age. All medications, cleaning supplies, poisons, etc. should be locked in upper cabinets. Safety gates should be installed at the top and bottom of staircases. Upright furniture such as dressers, bookcases, and TVs should be secured to the wall to avoid tipping over. Survey the garage for potential dangers as well (gasoline, paints, tools, etc).
- AVOID baby walkers. These allow infants to reach higher and move faster than they are developmentally ready to handle. Most walker injures occur while adults are watching; they are simply unable to respond quickly enough! Crawling is important part of a baby's exploration. Using an infant walker can lead to delays in normal motor and mental development.
- Never leave your child unattended near water (bathtub, swimming pool, toilet, etc.). Even an inch of water in a bucket can be a drowning hazard to a child. Lower hot water heater to 120°F and test bath water, bottle water, etc. on wrist.
- Use an approved insect repellent if avoidance of mosquitoes, ticks, and other biting insects is not possible.
- You may now use sunscreen on your baby, but remember to avoid allowing your baby to overheat in the sun, car, etc.
- All parents & other caregivers should learn infant CPR.
- Second-hand smoke exposure is very dangerous for your child. Do not smoke around your baby, in your home or car.