

## Tips for Keeping Your Baby Healthy and Safe

### Home Safety

- Keep your baby in a high chair or playpen if you are in the kitchen.
- Do not use a baby walker.
- Place gates on stairs.
- Close doors to rooms where your baby could be hurt, like the bathroom.
- To prevent choking, keep small objects and plastic bags away from your baby.
- Lock up poisons, medicines, and cleaning supplies; call Poison Help at 1-800-222-1222 if your baby eats them.

### Playing with Your Baby

- Play simple games with your baby, such as peek-a-boo and patty-cake.
- Offer active play with mirrors, floor gyms, and colorful toys.
- If your baby is fussy, offer safe toys to hold and put in his or her mouth. Make sure your baby is getting regular naps and playtimes.
- Put your baby to bed when he or she is sleepy but still awake.

### Feeding Your Baby

- If you are still breastfeeding, that's great! Keep breastfeeding until your baby is at least 1 year old or longer if you both like.
- If you are formula feeding, use an iron-fortified formula, not cow's milk. Continue until your baby is at least 1 year old.
- You can start to feed your baby solid food when your baby is ready.
- Here are some signs that your baby is ready for solid food:
  - Opens mouth for the spoon
  - Sits with support
  - Has good head and neck control
  - Is interested in foods you eat

# HEALTHY *and* SAFE at 6 Months



### Crib and Playpen

- Lower your baby's mattress before baby can sit up.
- Don't use a crib with drop sides.
- Do not use loose, soft bedding or toys such as quilts, pillows, or pillow-like bumper pads.
- If you are using a mesh playpen, make sure the openings are less than ¼ inch apart (about the size of a pea).

## Starting New Foods

- Start new foods one at a time.
  - Start with iron-fortified cereal.
  - Try fruits and vegetables or pureed meats after your baby eats cereal well.
  - You might have to give your baby a new food 10-15 times before he or she will like it. This is normal.
- It is important that your baby gets enough iron. Red meat is a good source of iron.
- Avoid foods that can cause allergies — peanuts, nuts, fish, and shellfish.

## Safe and Healthy Feeding

- Offer your baby 1–2 tablespoons of solid food 2–3 times per day.
- Don't feed your baby too much. Here are signs that your baby is full:
  - Baby leans back
  - Baby turns away
- Do not force your baby to eat or finish foods.
- To prevent choking, only give your baby very soft, small bites of finger foods
- Ask your doctor or nurse about programs like WIC that can help pay for food and formula.

## Your Baby's Development

- Most babies have doubled their birth weight by 6 months. Your baby's growth will slow down now.
- Sit your baby up so he or she can look around.
- Talk with your baby by copying the sounds your baby makes.
- Look at and read books together.

## Child Care

- Choose a mature, trained, and responsible babysitter or caregiver.
- You can talk with your doctor or nurse about your child care choices.

## Healthy Teeth

- You can pass bacteria from your mouth to your baby. This can give your baby gum disease or tooth decay. Here's what you can do:
  - Go to your own dentist twice every year to keep your teeth healthy.
  - Do not share spoons or cups with your baby.
  - Clean baby's pacifier with soap and water. Never clean the pacifier with your mouth.
- Use a cold teething ring if your baby has sore gums with teething.

## Taking Care of Yourself

- Call on others for help.
- Encourage your partner to help care for your baby.
- Ask your child's doctor or nurse about helpful resources if you are raising your baby alone.
- Invite friends over or join a parent group.

## What to Expect at your Baby's 9 Month Visit:

Your child's doctor will talk about -

- Disciplining your baby
- New foods and routines
- Helping your baby learn
- Car seat safety
- Safety at home

### To Learn More

- **Poison Control Center** 1-800-222-1222
- **Child Safety Seat Inspection** 1-866-SEATCHECK, 1-866-732-8243 or [www.seatcheck.org](http://www.seatcheck.org)
- **Immunizations** at [aap.org/immunization](http://aap.org/immunization)
- **MaineHealth Learning Resource Center** 1-866-609-5183 or <https://mainehealth.org/healthy-communities/learning-resource-center>
- **Barbara Bush Children's Hospital** [www.bbch.org](http://www.bbch.org)
- **American Academy of Pediatrics** [healthychildren.org](http://healthychildren.org)
- **2-1-1 Maine** (a directory of local services) 211 or 1-877-463-6207 or [211maine.org](http://211maine.org)
- **MaineHealth** [mainehealth.org](http://mainehealth.org)