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Height: \_\_\_\_\_ %  
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**Pediatric Partners**

OF VIRGINIA

## 6 Month Visit

### Feeding

Most babies are developmentally ready to eat solid foods by 6 months. The tongue thrust reflex is fading so the baby does not push the food out of his mouth. Your baby can move the food to the back of his mouth by lifting his tongue and open his mouth in anticipation. Your baby should also be able to tell you that he is full or doesn't want more by turning his head away or leaning back. Feed your baby in a bouncy chair or high chair so that you can see each other. Responding to your baby's behavior during feedings is important. Let your baby help to decide how much you feed them. Don't force them to eat or finish foods. It can take 10-15 exposures before a new food may be accepted.

Breast milk and formula are still the most important source of nutrition for your baby. How a parent introduces solids is very individualized. For years, pediatricians have recommended that parents start feeding with iron fortified rice cereal. Experts now recommend early introduction of soft pureed meats especially red meat since it is an excellent source of iron and zinc. Feeding iron fortified cereal with vitamin-C rich foods like baby fruits enhances the absorption of the iron. After your baby accepts the iron fortified cereal or meat, introduce other pureed or soft fruits and vegetables. The order that you introduce these is up to you. As your baby progresses from very smooth food to foods with more texture, introduce finger foods such as cereal and soft bananas. Other examples include small cubes of soft cheese, peaches, pears, and soft cooked vegetables. By 9 months, babies may be eating 3 meals of complementary foods each day.

Juices can be introduced at this time. It is probably best to wait until after your baby is eating solid food more than 3 times per day. Nutrition experts recommend limiting juice to 2 to 4 ounces per day offered in a cup. Juice is not an important source of nutrition or vitamins for your baby.

Avoid giving your baby foods that are choking risks such as peanuts, popcorn, hot dogs or sausages, carrot sticks, celery sticks, whole grapes, raisins, corn, whole beans, large pieces of raw vegetables or fruit. Do not feed your baby raw honey due to the risk of botulism.

### Sleep

Babies can sleep through the night by this time. Develop a bedtime routine that helps your baby transition to sleep. Put your baby in his/her crib when they are drowsy but not asleep. If your baby falls asleep on his/her own in the crib, it is more likely that they will be able to go back to sleep on their own if she/he awakens in the middle of the night.

Continue to put your baby to sleep on his/her back even though he may be able to roll over at this time. You do not need to roll your baby back to his/her back once they can roll over. Experts recommend that your baby sleep in the crib, not in your bed. Be sure your baby's crib is safe: crib slats no more than 2 3/8 inches apart; firm, snugly fitting mattress; lower the crib mattress and remove bumper pads once

your baby begins to stand. If you are using a mesh playpen or portable crib, the weave should have openings less than ¼ inches. Never leave the baby in a mesh playpen with the drop-side down.

### **Safety Tips**

Continue to use a rear facing safety seat secured in the back seat. When your baby weights 20-30 pounds or is 26-28 inches long, switch to a rear facing convertible seat. It is now recommended that infants and toddlers continue to use the rear facing safety seats until they are 2 years old. Never place your baby's safety seat in the front seat of a car with a passenger air bag. The back seat is the safest place for children of any age to ride.

Do not leave your baby alone in a tub of water even if you are using a bath ring. Your baby will be rolling soon if not already-avoid leaving your baby alone in high places like changing tables, beds, and sofas. By 6 months your baby will be reaching well and putting everything in his mouth. Don't drink hot liquids or smoke while holding your baby. Keep all small objects and toys with small parts out of reach.

Your baby will start exploring his environment very soon. Keep all poisonous substances, medications, cleaning agents, and paints and paint solvents locked in a safe place out of your baby's sight reach? Never store poisonous substances in empty jars or soda bottles. Install safety devices on drawers and cabinets in your living areas. Install gates at the top and bottom of stairs. Place safety locks and guards on windows. Remove dangling telephone, electrical, blind, or drapery cords near your baby's crib or your living areas. Place covers in electrical sockets.

Continue to keep your baby out of direct sunlight. Use hats with brims and light weight clothing. Use sunscreen during the late spring, summer and early fall.

### **Oral Health**

Your baby will start teething if not already. Teething does not cause fever but can make some babies fussy. Your baby will put his/her fingers, toys, and almost everything else in their mouth. A cool teething ring may help ease mild discomfort. The bacteria that contribute to the development of cavities can be spread from parent to infant by sharing spoons or food and by putting the infant's pacifier in the parent's mouth. An infant can also develop cavities if she/he is put to bed with a bottle containing juice, breast milk, or formula. Start cleaning your baby's gums with a clean cloth.

**Please make your baby's next appointment when they are 9 months old.**