

## Hi. I am your baby.

I am now 6 to 9 months old. I have my own unique personality and my own way of doing things. I may do some things before other babies and I may do some things after them. Be patient. I will get there in my own time.

The most important thing you can do is to be warm, loving and responsive to me. This will help my brain develop and shape the way I learn, think and behave for the rest of my life. I also need you to take care of yourself. If you feel unhappy or have negative feelings, please talk to family, friends or your doctor.

To help you know what to expect, here are some common milestones most babies reach between 6 and 9 months old.

## Growth

### Size

- I am still growing quickly and will probably gain about 450 to 600 grams (1 to 1½ pounds) a month.

### Teeth

- Teething usually begins around 6 months old and will continue until I am 2 to 3 years old.
- My front bottom teeth will probably come through first, followed by my top front teeth.
- I might be fussy and cranky when I am teething and I'll probably drool a lot of saliva. I might not be very hungry.
- You can help me by letting me chew on a clean teething ring or damp washcloth. Do not use teething gel, ice cubes, teething biscuits or soft foods to help me teethe. I could choke on these things.
- Talk to my dentist or doctor if my gums become red and sore or if I get a fever or diarrhea when I am teething.
- You can clean my mouth by wiping my teeth and gums with a clean washcloth or gauze every day.

## Development

### Movement

- I can hold my own bottle and can grab my feet.
- I can reach for objects and hold them in each hand.
- I can pass objects from hand to hand and from hand to mouth.
- I can sit with support and, in time, can sit without support.
- I will support my whole weight on my legs when you support me in a standing position and will probably bounce on my legs.
- I can roll from my back to my front and front to my back.
- I might start crawling or moving some other way, like pushing myself backwards on my stomach or bum.
- By nine months, I can probably pull myself up to a standing position and can stand by holding on to furniture.

### Language

- Say my name when you talk to me. It is how I learn my own name and the names of people in my family.
- I like music, singing and playing simple games like pat-a-cake.
- I can tell when you are happy, sad or angry by the sound of your voice.
- I can make simple consonant sounds, like “da” and “ba” and might babble chains of consonants (p, m, h, n, w).
- I like to imitate sounds people make, like a cough, tongue click or growl.
- I like it when you copy the sounds and movements I make.
- I cry to get attention.
- I still squeal and babble.
- I can use my voice to show I am happy or unhappy.
- I will respond when I hear the word “no.”
- If I do not babble or make sounds, take me to a speech-pathologist.

### Vision and Hearing

- I can now see every color.
- I like to drop toys and then look to see where they have landed.

- I will look for toys or other objects that are hidden.
- I can find the source of sounds that I hear.
- I might get ear infections. If I seem to be having trouble hearing, take me to a doctor as soon as possible.

### Sexual Health

Children learn about sexuality daily and continue learning throughout their lives. Sexuality is an awareness of our entire self as a male or female. This is basic to healthy sexual development.

- I learn about love and trust by the way you hold and cuddle me.
- I need to hear the correct name of all my body parts, i.e., eyes, nose, penis, vulva or vagina.
- I might start to discover and explore my body including my sexual parts. This is a normal stage of my sexual development.

## Behavior and Emotions

### Thinking, Feeling and Doing

- I know my family and like to be around them.
- I love to interact with people and can be easily entertained.
- I might cry or act shy when people I don't know get too close to me.
- If I am unhappy or frustrated, I might cry, kick, bang or throw things. But please *never* shake me for any reason. Shaking can cause brain damage, blindness, paralysis or even death. Take a break, don't shake.
- I will try to copy some of the things you do, like making different faces.
- I will feel happy when I do something new or challenging.
- I am getting better at telling the difference between different textures, shapes and sizes.

### Sleeping

- I like to nap during the day and will probably still want 2 naps every day.
- I should have a regular bedtime and bedtime routine.
- I will probably sleep through the night.

### Playing

- I need to play and move! I learn more about myself and my world when I play.
- Some of the toys I might like are unbreakable mirrors, musical toys like bells and tambourines; baby books with board, cloth or vinyl pages; stacking toys in different sizes, shapes and colors; large building blocks; balls of all sizes and squeeze toys.
- I might get tired of a toy or activity, but I never get tired of your attention.

## Eating

- I still need breast milk or iron-fortified formula to help me grow for the first year. I can have whole milk when I am 9 to 12 months old but should not have skim or 2% milk until I am much older.
- If I am breastfed, ask our community health nurse or doctor about vitamin D supplements.
- I have used up all of the iron stores I had from birth. I must now get my iron from foods. Infant cereals with added iron are a good source of iron and are easy for me to eat.
- You can gradually introduce me to vegetables and fruits that have been completely mashed and strained.
- I can also eat meats that have been cooked soft, mashed and strained. Chicken and lamb are good meats to start with.
- When I try a new food, wait 4 to 7 days before introducing another food. This will give us time to see how I accept each new food.
- I will let you know when I am full. I will keep my lips tightly closed if I don't want the food you are offering me.
- Try giving me foods I can eat with my fingers, like plain crackers, dry toast, soft fruits or chunks of cooked vegetables. Do not give me food with nuts and seeds. They can make me choke.
- I can eat egg yolk but should not have egg white until I am over 1 year old.
- With a little help, I can drink my milk, unsweetened fruit juice or water from a cup. Limit my juice to 125 ml (½ cup) per day.
- I don't need foods that have added salt, sweeteners or other seasoning.

## Child Care

- If I need child care, talk to a community health nurse. She can tell you what to look for in a child care setting.

## Keeping Me Safe

I am on the move! Now is the time to baby-proof the world around me. Get down on your hands and knees and try to see the world the way I see it. Look for any possible hazards, such as sharp corners on furniture, drawers, cupboards and toilet seats that I can open, electric outlets, dangling electrical cords and anything else I might get into.

**Most childhood injuries can be predicted and prevented.** Here are some **simple guidelines** to help keep me safe between 6 and 9 months old...and beyond.

### Falls are the leading cause of hospital visits for childhood injuries

- Put baby gates at the top and bottom of stairs.
- Check furniture for sharp corners. If possible, move this furniture out of the way or use corner and edge protectors.
- Lower the mattress in my crib as soon as I can sit.
- Always strap me in with the safety straps when you put me in a high chair. Stay with me when I am in a high chair.
- Use a high chair that has a wide base so it cannot be tipped over if someone bumps into it.
- Strap me securely into my stroller or carriage.
- Make sure my car seat is properly installed.
- My crib should have a bolted mattress support, not S-shaped hooks. The space between bars should be no more than 6 centimeters ( $2\frac{3}{8}$  inches).
- The mattress should fit snugly in my crib.

### Car Safety

- One of the most important things you can do to keep me safe is to put me in an approved child safety seat **every time** we travel by car.
- I am safest in a rear facing child safety seat until my first birthday. Be sure to read the manufacturer's directions – some are only recommended rear facing until I weigh 9 kg (20 pounds) but others not until 16 kg (35 pounds).

- If we are using a used child safety seat, it is best to have it inspected. Discuss this with our community health nurse.
- I am safest when you put my child safety seat in the back seat. **Never** put me in the front seat if our car has a passenger-side air bag.
- Do not forget to use the tether on the back of my seat when it faces forward.
- Talk to our community health nurse if you have questions about installing and using my child safety seat.
- Never leave me alone in a vehicle. What you think will take 5 minutes may take much longer. I can become too hot in a vehicle in the summer and too cold during the winter.
- I should not eat or drink by myself while travelling in a vehicle. I could choke while you are driving and you may not be able to help me.

### Sun Safety

- Keep me out of the direct sun. You can use sunscreen for babies older than 6 months, but light clothing, hats and shade are still the best protection.

### Household Safety

- Lock up or put out of reach all poisons, medicines, household cleaners and alcoholic beverages.
- Know first aid for poisoning and keep the phone number for the Poison Control Centre close to the phone. The phone number in Alberta is 1-800-332-1414.
- Keep knives, forks, scissors and other sharp utensils in a latched drawer.
- Make sure there is a safety cover in every wall outlet and a light bulb in every lamp socket.
- Keep cords from venetian blinds well out of reach. I can strangle myself with a blind cord.
- Check that bath water is not too hot and use a non-skid mat in the bathtub.
- Keep cords for things like kettles and irons out of reach.
- Unplug electrical appliances that aren't being used, especially in the bathroom.
- Lock up garbage containers or use containers that have child-resistant lids.

### Water Safety

- Never leave me alone in or near a bathtub or swimming pool – even a baby swimming pool. I can drown in just a few inches of water.

### Choking

- If you put me in a playpen, check the top rails for tears or holes. I might bite off chunks of vinyl or plastic and choke.
- Anything I might put in my mouth should be too big for me to swallow.
- Do not give me hard, small and round, smooth or sticky solid foods like hard candies, cough drops, gum, raisins, nuts or grapes. They may block my airway and I could choke.
- Choose toys and equipment appropriate for my age.
- Check my soother often to make sure it is not soft and cannot come apart.
- Never hang my soother on a string around my neck.

### Burns and Scalds

- Be very careful when you eat, drink or carry anything hot when I am close to you.
- If you warm up my formula in a microwave oven, always shake the bottle and check the temperature before you feed it to me.
- If you haven't already, set our hot water heater to below 50 °C.

### Animals and Children

- Animals, even the family pet, can hurt me. Stay with me when animals are around.
- My siblings and other children can hurt me. Stay with me when other children are around.

### Fire Safety

- Make sure our house has smoke detectors that work.
- Plan and practice how our family will get out of the house if there is a fire.

## Questions?

If you have questions concerning your child's healthy growth and development, contact your community health nurse at your local health region office.

### Health Link Alberta

Edmonton, call 408-LINK (5465)  
Calgary, call 943-LINK (5465)  
Outside Edmonton and Calgary local calling areas, call toll-free 1-866-408-LINK (5465)

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6 to 9 months

Growth and Development Series

