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4 – 6 Months

Babies are getting better control of the head and neck muscles. They enjoy being held to sit or stand and they enjoy sitting in seats or on your lap. Babies like to coo, chuckle, squeal, and follow you around the room with their eyes. They are learning they have hands and will look at their hands and reach their hands towards people, especially parents. Babies also recognize familiar objects like their bottles. At this age babies are very personable and happy much of the time. Crying, however, can come quickly if a favorite face disappears, if they tire of a certain activity or position, and of course, if they are hungry to tired.

Just remember, this behavior is the beginning of normal likes and dislikes. Babies now have more ability to show their preferences by using cries, smiles, and body movements. As your baby responds, perhaps a little more strongly or happily at times, you will continue to learn the special qualities of your baby's unique personality.

Feeding

Babies are taking breast milk and/or formula steadily. The total amount of milk per day does not usually increase beyond this age. Babies are more capable of swallowing solid foods and we suggest starting with cereal and vegetable (See Infant Nutrition Handout).

Many babies will be eating 1-2 (and sometimes 3) meals of solid food per day by 6 months of age. You may gradually increase the food while continuing the breast milk or formula intake at about 24 to 36 ounces per day. When your child shows interest in a cup we encourage starting with water, breast milk, or formula.

Safety

Rolling over begins during this period. NEVER leave your baby unattended on any high surfaces including couch, bed, changing table, dining table, or kitchen counter. Always keep one hand on your baby during changing times and while on our office table during checkups. Now is also the time to stop swaddling your baby with their arms down during sleep. Playpens, the floor (away from stairs), and cribs are SAFE places for play and changing diapers. NEVER turn your back or trust infant seats to hold your baby at this stage.



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Microwave ovens are not recommended to warm bottles or food. Bottle warmers or a container of warm water is best.

Many types of baby equipment may be useful including bouncy seats, high chairs, or bumbo seats but **MUST** be used safely. We will be glad to discuss the pros and cons of each.

Begin to watch stairs and small objects as your baby rolls and reaches. It is not too early to latch cabinet doors, block plugs, or gate stairs.

MOVEABLE BABY WALKERS ARE NOT RECOMMENDED. Baby walkers that can move across the floor have been responsible for many injuries. While the walkers are convenient they provide no assistance or enhancement to your child's development or walking. Stationary baby exer-saucers are much safer.

A Few Words on Being a Parent

This is a cute, social age. Smiles, coos, and vocalizations come regularly. Babies can entertain themselves, and you, with their voices. Nighttime sleep is usually improved from earlier months. Enjoy this time and let your baby's patterns help you work into more regular routines.

With your help your baby will continue to make new discoveries about the strength of their body, the use of their voice, and will become more and more responsive. You can encourage these things by:

- ✓ Using different positions to help your baby see the world. Play some on the tummy, some on the back, in safe seats, and in your arms. Tummy play is especially important for encouraging future sitting balance. As babies adjust their head position while on their tummy they practice the type of balance so important to their future sitting and upper body strength. Textured quilts and bright, noisy, or musical toys are helpful to keep baby's interest while in this position.
- ✓ Place safe toys within easy reach. Toys that suction to a tray or toys that right themselves after being hit are especially useful at this age. Do not use toys that could cause entanglement in strings or cords.
- ✓ Talk, smile, sing, and respond to your baby's vocalizations. Imitate those sounds you hear too!
- ✓ Mirrors are still great fun.



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- ✓ When crying comes, as it inevitably does, give steady reassurance and distract with a variety of activities, new positions, or a little extra comfort in your arms.

NEXT CHECKUP: 6 MONTHS OF AGE