



Growing Up Healthy

You and Your 4-6 month old

Your 4 to 6 month old infant will be developing their personality and way of doing things. Your baby will grow and change at his/her own rate. Below is some information to help you understand your baby.

If you have concerns about your baby's care, see **More Information** on the back of this pamphlet, or contact your local public health nurse.

Your Needs

- Make time for you and your partner to stay in touch with each other. This may be easier now that your baby sleeps for longer periods.
- Connect with family, friends and other parents.
- Look for breastfeeding support and parent and tot groups in your community.
- You can breastfeed your baby anytime and anywhere.
- Many mothers continue to breastfeed when they return to work.
- Include your baby when getting physically active. You can walk with your baby in her stroller or join an activity class with her.

Contact your health care provider to:

- Discuss any questions about you and your baby.
- Discuss feelings of depression or anxiety, or thoughts of harming yourself or your baby.

Your Baby's Needs

Love and Comfort

- Your baby is more social now and needs interaction with you and others. Smiling and talking to him makes him feel involved.
- Baby's feeding and sleeping routines continue to be important. Be flexible, routines will change.
- Hug your baby, and let him know that your love is forever. This helps develop trust and self-esteem.

Crying

- Your baby will cry for many reasons, such as being wet or having dirty diapers, hungry, being over stimulated, tired, cold, hot, etc.
- Crying from teething can be lessened when you give your baby something safe to chew on.

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- It is normal to feel frustrated and helpless sometimes. If you feel frustrated by your baby's crying, put her in a safe place (crib, cot or playpen). Take a short break in another area of your home.

Teething commonly happens during this time and may cause your baby to cry more or be fussy.

Sleep

- Your baby will likely sleep 14 hours a day with longer stretches at night and less time during the day.
- Your baby is beginning to understand day and night.
- Bedtime routines continue to be important. Bathing, feeding, reading books and cleaning baby's mouth are ideas to include in his bedtime routine.
- Always place your baby on his back to sleep. He may move around as he sleeps. Once your baby can roll from his back to his front, it is okay to allow him to change positions when sleeping.
- The safest place for your baby to sleep is his own crib.
- When your baby can push up onto his hands and knees, remove mobiles and railing toys from the crib/cot.
- When your baby is calm and drowsy, put your baby to bed and let him put himself to sleep.

Play and Move

- Your baby should be active when she is awake.
- Play peek-a-boo. Enjoy your baby's laughter.
- Help her roll over on the floor. Bounce her gently on your knee.
- Give her toys to grasp and hold. Encourage movement from hand to hand.
- Let your child take the lead during play time. Interact with her in response to her cues and do not try to structure or guide play.
- Continue with 'tummy time' when she is awake.
- Play together, actively move her arms, bicycle her legs.
- At times, smile and be silent with your baby.
- Screen time (TV, computer, phone) is not recommended for children under two years of age.

Play and Learn

- Babies "coo and babble" and may copy sounds.
- Copy the sounds he makes. Talk, sing and make noises.
- Reading helps him learn the sound of your voice and how to speak.

- Your baby will turn his head and eyes to look for sounds.
- Your baby learns through his 5 senses. Use touch, taste, smell, hearing and seeing when playing and interacting with him.



Seeing and Hearing

- Show your baby brightly coloured toys and objects to stimulate her interest. Slowly move the object from side to side and up and down.
- Your baby hears you talk and knows when you are nearby.
- Your baby startles or cries to sudden loud sounds and looks toward that sound.
- Eye doctors recommend an exam of the eyes at 6 months of age.
- If you are concerned about your baby's hearing, ask for a referral.

Spend time playing and enjoying your baby. The best toys are your face, smile, arms and body.

Feeding Relationship

- Feeding is an important part of the relationship between you and your baby and a special time to cuddle and connect.
- Follow his cues of hunger and fullness.
- Your baby is not ready to eat solids until about 6 months when he can sit up without support, hold his head up, and hold food in his mouth without pushing it out right away.
- Your baby needs opportunities to be with you during family meals. He loves being with you and learning what food is all about.
- He will explore food the same way he explores the rest of the world by using his eyes, hands, nose and mouth.



Wait until your baby is six months old and sitting up well to start feeding her the same foods as the family.

Feeding

- Continued breastfeeding to two years of age and beyond meets your baby's and your health needs.
- Babies usually feed 8 or more times in 24 hours. How often your baby feeds may not change until he receives enough calories from family foods at about 12 months of age.
- If you choose to feed your baby formula, check with a health professional to discuss how to do this safely.
- Your baby has her own feeding pattern. Feed baby when she wants to eat, when she is wide awake and calm.
- Follow her cues to learn what is normal. Let her feed her way – much or little, fast or slow, steady or start and stop.
- When she is ready to eat solid foods, start with an iron-rich food such as pureed meat, mashed well cooked egg or an iron fortified baby cereal.
- If you have questions, or need assistance about feeding, contact your public health nurse or lactation consultant. See GUH-6-12 Months for more information on introducing solids.

Build Strong Teeth

- Breastfeeding supports proper jaw and muscle development and assists with the correct positioning of teeth.
- Your child's first dental visit should be before his first birthday.
- Set a routine. **Lift the lip** to look at his gums and watch for new teeth.
- If his teeth have not appeared, wipe his gums with a clean, wet washcloth. If teeth are present brush his teeth with a child sized, soft-bristled toothbrush twice a day, especially at bedtime.
- Use fluoridated toothpaste the size of a grain of rice for children less than 3 years of age, with teeth, who are at risk of developing early childhood tooth decay.

- Fluoride varnish programs are available in your community. For more information, contact your local public health office.
- Your child does not have the skill to clean his teeth by himself. You need to brush his teeth.
- NEVER put your child to bed with a bottle or sippy cup. This prevents the liquids containing sugar from pooling in the mouth which put your child at risk for tooth decay. This can happen when using sippy cups or bottles filled with formula, breast milk or any other liquid containing sugar. Enjoy holding your child while you feed him before putting him to bed.
- Keep your own mouth clean and healthy. This prevents spreading decay-causing germs to your child. Brush and floss twice a day, have regular check-ups and receive dental treatment as needed.



Pacifier (Soother) Use

If a pacifier is used, consider the following:

- Check it often for strength and tears.
- Do not coat with a sweet substance.
- Offer only after and between feeding. Do not use the pacifier to delay or replace a feeding.
- The pacifier should be soft enough to flatten out against the roof of the mouth.
- Clean pacifiers frequently.
- Placing the pacifier in your mouth passes germs to your child. These germs can cause tooth decay and other diseases.

Vitamin D

- Vitamin D supports healthy bone development.
- Talk to your public health nurse about your baby's need for vitamin D supplements.

Growth

- Your baby's rate of growth directly affects his appetite. When your baby wants to eat more it usually means he is going through a growth spurt.



Pee and Poop

- Your baby has his own pee and poop patterns.
- Poop may be yellow, green, tan or brown. The softness or firmness also varies.
- Your baby will often grunt, groan and turn red in the face when he is pooping.
- Constipation is when your baby's poops are hard and dry. Constipation is rare in babies. Infrequent poops can be normal.
- Diarrhea is poop that is softer or more watery than the usual poop. Continue to feed to ensure your baby stays hydrated.
- Signs of dehydration are decreased amount of pee, dry lips, and sunken soft spot on your baby's head.
- Clean your baby's bottom and genitals at each diaper change.
- Diaper rash is caused by an irritation of your baby's skin from pee, poop, an infection, or the diaper itself.

Safety

- All infant equipment should be used according to the child's age and developmental stage. Always follow the manufacturer's recommendations.

Your child can easily choke.
Keep small objects out of reach.

Never Shake a Baby

- Handle your baby gently. Shaking can cause permanent brain damage, blindness or even death.
- Put your baby in a safe place and take a break if you are frustrated with her crying.

Tobacco-free Home

- Babies who breathe tobacco smoke have more lung and ear infections. They are also more likely to die from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

- Parents, family and visitors who smoke need to smoke outside.
- Addiction to tobacco smoking is very strong. Sometimes having children makes you want to change your lifestyle choice. There are programs and medications that can help.

Falls

- Always use safety straps when available, e.g. on a change table.
- The safest place to leave your baby alone is a crib or playpen.
- When changing, dressing or bathing your baby, keep one hand on her body at all times.
- Baby walkers are dangerous and are illegal to be sold in Canada. Your baby could fall down stairs, pull on appliance cords or tip over when using a walker.

Your baby is learning to get around. Protect her by using baby gates at stairs and open areas.

Suffocation and Strangulation

- Be sure crib mattress fits snugly and remove all plastic wrapping.
- Putting anything around your baby's neck, like a necklace or soother cord, can strangle your baby.
- Avoid ties or ribbons on baby clothes, toys or pacifiers.
- When using a baby sling or sack, ensure that your baby's face is not blocked by the sling.

Car Seats

- Buckle your baby in a properly installed car seat every time he rides in a vehicle.
- Use a rear-facing car seat in the back seat of your vehicle.
- A trained technician can help you make sure your car seat is installed properly. You can find a trained technician at <https://www.sqi.sk.ca/carseats>.



Bath Time

- Always test the temperature of the bath water before putting your baby in the bath.
- Bath water should feel warm and not hot to your wrist, inner arm or elbow.
- Your baby's skin burns 4 times faster than your skin.
- Young children can drown in a small amount of water. Always supervise your child when she is in water.

Alcohol and Drug Use

- Avoid the use of drugs and alcohol when caring for your baby.
- These substances affect your ability to respond to your baby's needs, and impact your judgement.
- If you are breastfeeding and are thinking about drinking alcohol on a special occasion, contact your public health nurse or go to www.beststart.org (see Mixing Alcohol and Breastfeeding) for more information.

Common Concerns

- Clean your baby's eyes with a clean cloth and warm water. Start by the inner corner of the eye. Use a different part of the cloth for each eye.
- Crusty, yellow or green, gooey eyes may mean an infection.
- Fever is a serious concern and occurs quickly. Seek medical assistance.

Colic is not a disease. Babies outgrow this fussiness by about 4 months of age.



Medicines

- Use prescription medication as directed.
- Consider your baby's weight and age when using over the counter medications. Consult your pharmacist for dosing.
- Do not use medication past the expiry date.



Other Family Members

- Share this resource with family members and others who spend time with your baby.
- Young children have difficulty showing the excitement they are feeling. They act loving to your baby and then push him away the next minute.
- Encourage older children to help with your baby in an age appropriate way.
- Spend time with older children by themselves. Reassure them they are loved and wanted.

Family pets

- Do not leave your baby alone with pets. Even if you think a pet is "safe", reactions to small children can be instinctual and may result in injury and, at times, death.
- Wash your hands between handling pets or their waste and touching your baby. Pets carry some diseases that can transfer to humans.

Water

- Clean safe water is important for the entire family for meal preparation, drinking, and cleaning.
- If you use your own water source, your water should be tested twice per year such as in the spring and fall, or if concerns arise. The Water Security Agency has more information about this.
- If you have been notified of a drinking water advisory in your area, follow the precautions outlined by your municipality.

More Information

Here are some trusted websites:

Saskatchewan Immunization Fact Sheets and Caring for Your Child's Fever	www.saskatchewan.ca/immunize
Ministry of Health – Child Health and Parenting	www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/health/wellness-and-prevention/children-health-and-parenting
Saskatchewan Poison Center	1-866-454-1212
Immunize Canada	www.immunize.ca
The Saskatchewan Prevention Institute	www.skprevention.ca
Government of Canada	https://www.canada.ca/en/services/health.html
International Breastfeeding Centre	ibconline.ca/information-sheets/
Dietitians of Canada	www.dietitians.ca
Caring for Kids	www.caringforkids.cps.ca
Safe Kids Canada	www.parachutecanada.org/safekidscanada
SGI Care Seat Information	https://www.sgi.sk.ca/carseats
Aftermarket Car Seat Products	https://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/motorvehiclesafety/safedrivers-childsafety-notices-d200401-menu-336.htm
Facts for Garage Sale Vendors	www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/garage-eng.php
Maternal Depression Online	https://www.onlinetherapyuser.ca/wellbeing-program
Low Risk Drinking Guidelines	http://www.ccsa.ca/Eng/topics/alcohol/drinking-guidelines/Pages/default.aspx
Al-Anon	https://sk-alanon.ca/includes/sk-alanon_index4.php
Smoker's Helpline	1-877-513-5333
Go Smoke Free	www.gosmokefree.ca
Water Security Agency	www.wsask.ca/Water-info/Domestic-Water-Well-Management
Daycare	https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/family-and-social-support/child-care/child-care-in-saskatchewan
Pre-Kindergarten	https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/education-and-learning/prek-12-education-early-learning-and-schools/prekindergarten
Pregnancy and Parenting in the Workplace	http://saskatchewanhumanrights.ca/pub/documents/publications/PPW_Imposition.pdf

For more information and advice, contact:

HealthLine – 811 (24 hour service), or your public health nurse, or your primary care provider.

