

Dear Mother and Dad:

Isn't your baby more fun now? At 6 to 9 months, he learns something new nearly every day! He may not move more or faster, but he now begins to move toward objects and to sit up. He may roll over when placed on his back. Soon he'll be sitting alone!

During these months, you're apt to be impressed with how hard your baby works. Or, instead, you might say how playful he is! However you want to put it, he's busy! Within your baby is a powerful force for growth. As each part of his body matures and is ready to be used, he uses it. He puts each new skill together with the old ones, into combinations which send him further forward. Upward, actually—for this is the direction he takes. Head up first, then body propped up in sitting. Many babies detour to creep or crawl or roll. But not all do this. And, finally, your baby himself pulls up to stand. You just can't keep him down.

A baby's increasing ability to handle his body is the best indication that his brain is developing well. An alert baby, interested in everything about him, is using his mind. You can tell! He shows you that he knows what is going to happen next by adjusting his posture as you lower him into the bathtub. Or as he hears the car approaching in the evening by looking toward the door Daddy always uses.

Through daily experiences, he learns. He'll learn the most if he has a change of scenery now and then, some interesting things to do, and people interested in what he does.

Go to him frequently! Pat him! Talk to him! Kiss him! Or laugh with him. It takes only a minute and keeps him contented and certain that all is well.

PLAY TO AID GROWTH

Playing with sounds is the basis for learning to get along with them. Playing with people is the basis for learning how to get along with them. Playing with things helps your baby master his body, and eventually master his environment. He will enjoy a small collection of playthings. He really doesn't need much, and only a few at a time. He'll concentrate for increasing lengths of time.

Encourage your baby's activity—physical, mental and social. Take advantage of opportunities to help him spot and reach for things. Use his rattle or make a toy of a spool and elastic. Hold it near your baby and encourage him to reach and grab for them. When he grasps it, pull gently to give some resistance. *But, remember the real reason for this "game" is to encourage your baby in activity and to help him have a satisfying experience.*

Looking in a mirror will help your baby begin to get an idea of himself. Ask "Where's Steven?" Then help him see himself and say "Here's Steven."

Help your child learn how to use his body to get what he wants. Put a favorite toy on a blanket or a diaper just beyond his reach. Probably he will reach or crawl to get it and,



You and Your Baby

6 to 9 months

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in the process, learn how to do for himself.

Children love to pull on strings, especially if the pulling brings a toy to them. You can make this kind of toy with a store string attached to a ball, rattle or another object.

Hide-and-seek becomes fun at this age. You may want to begin by partially hiding a toy under a blanket. After he gets the idea, completely hide the toy. Encourage him to lift the blanket to find it.

Stacking and nesting toys increase a baby's idea of space relationships. Empty food cans make good stacks or nests of toys. Check for sharp edges before baby plays with them. You'll have fun showing him how to make a pyramid. Don't expect him to have the same results until he has lots of practice.

Have fun playing with your baby. It's good for you and so important in his growth and development.

LEARNING TO TALK

Around your baby's sixth month, or a little earlier, you will hear him repeating sounds. Babies seem to enjoy both feeling and listening to what happens when these sounds are repeated. This "babbling" gives them practice.

Babbling changes when your baby is around eight months old. There will be an increase in the variety of syllables and inflections he uses. He now sounds as if he's making a statement or giving a command or asking a question.

Your eight-month-old baby may understand what you say by how you say it. He may react by being interested, afraid or happy.

Don't be puzzled if your baby temporarily loses interest in babbling or imitation. That's all right. He is probably getting ready to learn something else, like crawling or standing or walking. In learning, he can concentrate on only one thing at a time. When he's ready, he'll return to the babbling.

When he "babbling" to you, "babble" the same thing back to him.

Your baby understands words and phrases before he knows their meaning. He will respond to some words with gestures to show his understanding. He may clap his hands when he hears you say "pat-a-cake." Expose him to other rhythms and games like *This Little Pig Went to Market*; *So Big*; *One, Two, Buckle My Shoe*; and *Hickory Dickory Dock*. They will help him learn words and rhythm.

EATING CHANGES

Been noticing that your baby eats less at one or another of his feedings? If this is so, and he's taking fairly substantial amounts of foods other than milk, try shifting to three meals a day. Most babies make this shift between 6 to 8 months of age. If your baby will need some nourishment to tide him over between meals, give orange juice mid-morning and milk mid-afternoon. Some babies like extra milk before bedtime to help them settle down.

Your meal plan may look something like this:

Breakfast: Iron-fortified cereal, dry toast, milk, Vitamin C enriched juice.

Mid-morning: Vitamin C. Enriched juice, if not given at breakfast.

Noon meal: Milk, teething crackers or biscuits.

Evening meal: Meat or eggs, fruit and milk.

As the time goes by, you'll feel free to experiment with other foods. Keep encouraging fruits, vegetables and meats!

For variety and interest, add food cooked for the family, such as finely minced cooked vegetables, canned fruits and fresh bananas. Some babies enjoy cottage cheese, plain or with milk. Try custards and milk puddings. After six months, a baby may like bread in the form of hard toast or zwieback, or fortified cereals.

When baby starts eating finger foods, supervise him so you can prevent choking if he swallows too large portions.

During the first year, emphasize fruits as

your baby's "desserts." They are neither overly sweet nor unduly high in calories in relation to other nutrients. Custards and milk puddings are next to fruits on the preferred list.

Needless to say, more concentrated sweets, high in calories and low in general nutritive value, cannot be recommended for infants and pre-school children. This includes baby food desserts.

LET ME DO IT!

Your baby will begin to show an interest in self-feeding. Some babies get the idea through being given a second spoon to hold while being fed. Or they try to "help" by putting a hand over yours during feeding with spoon or cup. More aggressive babies may even try to take the spoon or cup away from you. A spoon with a round bowl and a short straight handle is best for beginners self-feeding.

Encourage his attempts at independence, even though it means longer feeding periods and more clean up. He may require several months of gradual and patient learning before he can feed himself entirely alone. More time—maybe *much* more time—will elapse before it's done neatly. In the meantime, you can be so subtle in your assistance, your toddler will think he's doing the whole job himself. This is a great help in keeping up his interest in food!

LETTING THE BOTTLE GO

As your baby's menu takes on a more adult texture, you may be thinking about weaning. Begin by offering your baby a little milk or fruit juice in a cup.

There is no fixed age for weaning—Try to follow your baby's lead. If he appears to enjoy the cup, encourage it! He'll chew the lip edge at first, and spill a lot, but with practice he will learn to swallow smoothly. Put in just a little liquid, only a tablespoon at first, and let him handle the cup himself. When he gets used to that way of taking food, gradually eliminate bottle or breast feeding. Breast-fed babies can be weaned gradually to a cup after about six months. Bottle-fed babies usually like to suck the bottle a little longer.

Your baby will enjoy the independence of drinking from a cup, though he may revert to sucking at times, perhaps when he is troubled by teething or when he feels particularly babyish and cuddly.

In general, the older your child when weaned, the more attachment he feels to the bottle and the more determined he is to keep it. He may be entirely weaned by the time he is a year old, or he may cling to sucking for a longer time. It doesn't really matter. Just don't push or hold him back.

Your Extension Home Economist

For extra help you may wish to order the following publications.

Development and Behavior from Birth to Five Years. Cooperative Extension Service, Michigan State University, Extension Bulletin 437, East Lansing, Michigan.

Infant Care. HEW Children's Bur. Pub. 8. Supt. of Doc., U.S.G.P.O., Washington D.C. 20402 (.20c).

Your Baby's First Year. HEW Children's Bur. Publ. 400. Supt. of Doc., U.S.G.P.O., Washington, D.C. (.15c)

Your New Baby. Public Affairs Pamphlet No. 353. Public Affairs Pamphlets, 381 Park Ave., South, New York, N.Y. 10016 (.35c).

Baby Learning Through Baby Play. Ira J. Gordon. St. Martin's Press, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010 (\$3.95).

Prepared by Mrs. Janice Kukar, home economist in Oakland and Wayne Counties; Mrs. Marilyn Rudzinski, home economist in Macomb and St. Clair Counties; and Irene Ott, program leader in family living education, MSU.

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