

How your baby develops

6–9 months

What can I expect?

- Your baby will be curious and explore the world with their fingers, toes, eyes, ears and mouth.
- New skills include rolling, reaching, sitting up, searching and possibly crawling.
- Your baby will start eating with his or her fingers and drinking from a cup.
- Babies of this age recognise people they see every day, but might be shy around people they don't know.
- Your baby will enjoy making sounds, handling and exploring things, music and looking at books.
- Choose safe, durable and washable toys.
- Make sure your baby stays safe by going through the safety checklist.

Growth and development

From six to nine months, babies are never idle. They need to handle and explore things so they can learn more about their surroundings.

Everything goes into their mouth, even their feet.

At this age they:

- grasp objects on sight
- focus on near and far objects and follow them with their eyes across a room
- start trying to crawl.

By nine months

Babies will:

- explore everything within reach
- search in the correct place for hidden objects
- watch toys fall from the pram or highchair onto the floor
- learn to roll easily from tummy to back and then back to tummy
- try to reach an interesting toy or object
- learn to sit without support
- start to move around on the floor (rolling, starting to crawl, bottom shuffle etc)
- enjoy trying to eat with their fingers
- start drinking from a cup (spilling is common).

Your baby and other people

Over the months, babies learn a lot about the people around them.

Between six and nine months they:

- recognise people they see every day
- are wary of strangers and less familiar people.

Babies may cry if their mother is out of sight even for a short time because they cannot understand that she has not left forever. Games like peek-a-boo help teach babies that people and things exist even when they are not seen. This is a normal stage in your child's development as they are beginning to know the difference between familiar and unfamiliar people.

Learning through play

Between six and nine months babies develop further skills, which they use when they play.

Making sounds

This includes shaking rattles, crumpling paper, high-pitched squealing, laughing, joining sounds together (ma-ma, da-da) and imitating noises they hear. You can encourage this by repeating the sounds your baby makes and adding new sounds as well. Remember that when a dummy is in your baby's mouth, it is not possible for him or her to practise making the sounds needed for later speech development.

Handling and exploring

Handling and exploring toys and household objects helps babies learn about concepts like warm, cold, rough, smooth, soft and hard. They learn by banging things together, using their fingertips to grasp objects, passing objects from hand to hand, picking up small things between finger and thumb, and mouthing objects.

Enjoying music

Singing and rocking in time to music, imitating actions to songs and nursery rhymes, and clapping hands are all ways babies enjoy music.

Looking at books

Babies can't concentrate for long, but they love to look at pictures and spend time with you talking about them. Remember to choose a book that isn't easily torn, has bright and clear colours, and has only a couple of simple objects on each page.

Making conversation

This means listening to your baby and trying to understand their messages, as well as you talking to your baby. Talking to your baby and responding to their attempts to communicate will encourage your baby to develop language skills.

Toys

Lots of practice helps develop new skills. At this age, useful toys include:

- bright, colourful objects, such as mobiles within your baby's sight
- rattles or toys stretched across the pram (within reaching distance)
- rattles and other objects of various shapes, sizes and textures for holding and exploring, such as small rattles for small hands, toys with bells, soft blocks or balls
- toys on frames
- activity sets
- bath toys
- small blocks – larger than a match box, as anything smaller could be a potential choking hazard
- safe household objects
- musical toys
- pull-along toys
- books
- balls.

Make sure the toys you choose for your baby are safe, durable and washable by checking the safe toy guidelines in the *Keeping your baby safe* fact sheet. If toys are furry, remember babies can suck on the fur and swallow it.





Safety

Babies from six to nine months become very mobile as their need to explore and learn about their world increases. Keep your child safe by removing as many hazards as possible.

- Never leave your baby alone on a change table or other furniture (especially a bed), in the bath, in the car or near any family pets.
- Always make sure your baby is strapped in securely when in a highchair, stroller or shopping trolley to prevent falls.
- Protect your baby from sun and heat. Seek shade when outdoors and use protective clothing and a hat.
- Every time your baby travels in a car, make sure you use an approved baby capsule or child restraint. Never leave your baby alone in a car – not even for a few minutes.
- Look inside socks and gloves to be sure there are no loops or threads that can wind around your baby’s fingers and toes and cut off blood circulation.
- Never leave your baby alone during bath time. Babies should never be left in the care of older children, no matter how reliable they seem.
- Make sure there are no objects small enough to swallow around where your baby is playing. Pins, batteries, dead insects, buttons, beads, nuts, coins and other small objects may cause your baby to choke. Cigarette butts are poisonous to your children.
- Food can be inhaled easily when starting solids at around six months. Do not offer your baby hard foods such as pieces of apple or carrot, popcorn or nuts (refer to the *Introducing solids* fact sheets for more information).
- Place your baby in a playpen for short periods each day to help them understand and accept safety limitations later.

Your baby is very mobile and eager to explore. Check your house thoroughly AND OFTEN to keep your baby safe.

- All low cupboards should have child restraint latches, and drawers should have locks to limit access to poisons, medicines, cleaning products, knives, scissors and other sharp objects.
- Be alert to your baby’s habit of wanting to taste everything. Many things in the average back yard are poisonous, including mushrooms, poisonous plants, pool and garden chemicals. All poisons should be kept locked in a cupboard in the kitchen, laundry, bathroom and garage, out of your baby’s reach.
- Inside the house, store medicines, cleaning aids and any sharp or dangerous items well out of reach, or in a cupboard with a child-resistant latch.

- Check your home and garden for drowning hazards. Place nappy buckets high, out of the way, with the lid securely fitted. Keep bathroom and toilet doors closed. It only takes 5cm of water and two minutes for a child to drown. Make sure the fence and gates for the swimming pool work properly.
- Use safety barriers for steps, stairs and rooms you don’t want your child to enter, and to keep them away from fireplaces, swimming pools, heaters and spas.
- Keep kettle and iron cords out of reach of young children. Use stove and bench guards and curly cords to prevent children from pulling hot food and drinks onto themselves. Always turn saucepan handles to the back of the stove. Do not leave hot drinks or noodles unattended or within reach.
- Cover power points when they’re not in use.
- Dangerous objects like heaters and fans should be kept out of reach.
- Keep the bathroom door closed so your child can’t touch the hot taps. Consult your plumber to reduce household water temperature to avoid scalds and burns. Hot water regulators or thermostats should be fitted on all bath hot water taps.
- Do not use babywalkers. They are not recommended or necessary for normal healthy babies.
- Dress your baby in nightwear made with fabric that is slow to burn or designed to reduce fire danger. Look for the low risk fire danger rating on the tag.
- Never leave baby alone at other people’s homes—especially where young children do not normally live and where medication and other drugs may be stored within reach, such as on bedside tables.
- Ensure that your baby is sleeping safely, according to the guidelines in the *Keeping your baby safe* fact sheet.

More information

If you would like more information about your child’s development or you are concerned about your child, talk to your child health nurse or your doctor.

You could also ask at your local library for books on child development.

Acknowledgement

This fact sheet is the result of input and effort from many health professionals in Queensland. Their help with the content is greatly appreciated.

To access the full set of fact sheets, go to <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/child&youth/factsheets>.

