

# Growing Together



Because My First Years Last Forever

Volume 1

Issue 4

Six to Seven Months

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Dear Parent,

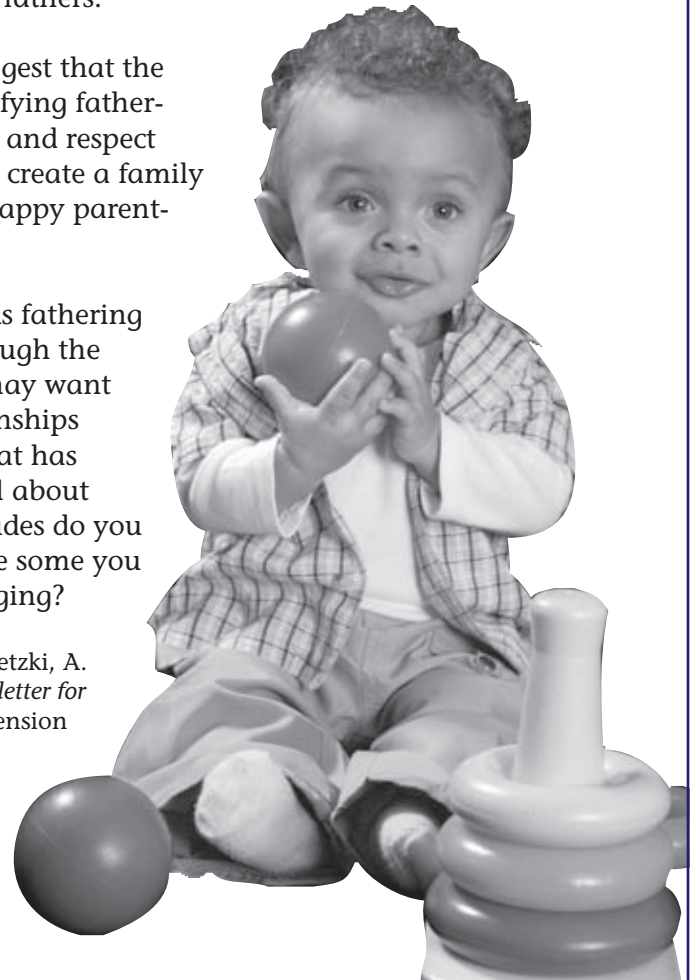
With baby's first breath, a father begins his lifelong journey with his son or daughter. Fathers are much more involved with the care of their children today. In some families, the father is the main caregiver for the child. The *Growing Together* newsletters are for fathers as well as mothers. Fathers can form close relationships with their babies. Like mothers, fathers can love, teach, guide, play with and nurture their children. In these important first years with baby, both father and mother will learn how to create a healthy, happy family life. Three areas that fathers can contribute are through:

**Attachment:** Small babies develop just as strong attachment to their fathers as to their mothers. In fact, some studies show that in gentle play situations, babies actually prefer their fathers.

**Relationship:** Experts suggest that the best way to promote a satisfying father-child relationship is to love and respect the mother. Loving parents create a family environment for healthy, happy parent-child relationships.

**Attitude:** Attitudes towards fathering often are passed down through the generations. New fathers may want to think about their relationships with their own fathers. What has influenced the way you feel about being a father? What attitudes do you want to continue? Are there some you would like to work at changing?

Kreeger, J., Haverson, V., & Maretzki, A. (1996). Keiki' O Hawaii. *A Newsletter for New Parents*, 3. Cooperative Extension Service College of Tropical Agriculture University of Hawaii at Manoa, Hawaii. Department of Health, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division.



*This newsletter is provided to parents by Help Me Grow of Cuyahoga County*

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# What It's Like to Be...

## SIX MONTHS OLD

### How I Grow

I creep backward and forward with my stomach on the floor.

I hold an object with one hand and then move it to the other hand.

I am not completely dependent on my eyes to guide my hand movements.

I turn and twist in all directions.

I may be able to sit by myself without any help.

### How I Talk

I still babble a lot, but I have more control of sounds.

I make f, v, th, s, sh, sz, m and n sounds

I'm beginning to understand some words by the tone of voice you use.

### How I Respond

I pick up things, shake them and listen to the sounds they make when I drop them.

I play games with people I know.

I get upset when I'm around grown-up strangers, but I'm friendly to children I don't know.

I may coo, hum or stop crying when I hear music.

I keep very busy doing something most of the time.

I save all my smiles for those I love; others may feel ignored.

### How I Understand

I look at and study things for a long time.

I turn objects upside down just to get another view of them.

I turn when I hear my name.

I learn how objects taste and feel by putting them in my mouth.

### How I Feel

I get excited when I'm having fun — everything is a game to me.

I may cry when you stop paying attention to me or take a toy away.

Kreeger, J., Haverson, V., & Marezki, A. (1996). *What it's like to be*. Keiki 'O Hawai'i. A Newsletter for New Parents, 3. Cooperative Extension Service College of Tropical Agriculture University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Hawai'i. Department of Health, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division.

## SEVEN MONTHS OLD

### How I Grow

I may get around by raising my back and pushing with my feet or by creeping on my hands and knees.

I sit without any support.

I keep my legs straight when you pull me up, and I try to stand by myself.

I explore my body with my mouth and hands.

I may have some teeth.

I feed myself finger foods but I sure am messy.

I play with a spoon and a cup but I'm not very good at using them yet.

I change objects from one hand to another.

### How I Talk

I giggle and squeal to attract your attention.

I imitate the sounds I hear.

I say several sounds like "mu," "da," "di" and "ba" — all in one breath.

### How I Respond

I want to be included in family activities.

I like to touch my reflection in the mirror.

I get excited when I see a picture of a baby.

I like toys that make noise like bells, music boxes or rattles.

I may put my hand over your mouth if you are talking to someone else and not paying attention to me.

### How I Understand

I concentrate better now and spend a lot of time examining things.

I can tell when people are angry or happy by the way they look and talk.

### How I Feel

I may be afraid of strangers, so stay with me when they are around. I like to keep my eye on you.

I feel strongly about what I want and don't want to do.

***Even professionals are not always in agreement on specific child-rearing and feeding recommendations. Consult your doctor if you receive conflicting information.***

***If you have concerns about how your child is growing and developing, call Help Me Grow at 216-736-4300 or visit [www.helpmegrow.org](http://www.helpmegrow.org)***

# How You Help Me Learn . . .

## SIX MONTHS OLD

- Give me soft stuffed animals and dolls that I can hold easily. When I can make a toy do something, it holds my interest longer. I like squeaky toys and toys that make a lot of noise when I shake or bang them. I like to watch toys that have moving parts.
- Let me play with plastic lids, metal measuring spoons, plastic bowls, wooden spoons or pots and pans.
- Put a cloth ball or bean bag where I can stretch my legs and kick it with my feet.
- If I'm not moving on my stomach yet, encourage me by putting my favorite toy just out of reach. Help me to wiggle to it.
- Spend time playing with me every day. I enjoy people more than objects. I'll learn more too.
- Tell me about a toy and show me how to use it. Let me look at it...smell it...chew it...squeeze it...pat it...bang it.

## SEVEN MONTHS OLD

- Give me a tennis ball or some small cans of food from the kitchen shelf to roll. I will start trying to stack the cans later.
- Sing to me when I am on your lap. I like the sound of your voice, the rhythm of your body and being close to you.
- Play peek-a-boo with me. It can be more sophisticated now since I can anticipate what is going to happen. You can hide behind a chair or a door and I will giggle while waiting for you to reappear.
- Talk to me about what is around me and put some of my feelings into words. Tell me what you are doing.
- Let me practice the skills that I have been developing. Practice is the basis of all my learning.
- Give me plastic or metal cups, bowls and pans. I will try putting one inside the other.
- Start reading to me. Cloth, plastic or hard cardboard books are best. Point to the pictures as you tell me about them.
- During my diaper change, keep me distracted with a toy. I won't squirm as much.
- Hide a toy under a cloth while I'm watching and I will find it.

# Activities for Babies

## Helping Baby's Memory

As your baby reaches **6 months**, watch how he reacts when things disappear from view. Does your baby lean over to look for things he dropped? Does your baby put a toy down and go right back to it later? These are signs that your baby's memory is growing. When he was younger things "out of sight" were things "out of mind." Now, he is learning that things exist even when not in sight.

## You can have fun with your baby and help his memory

- Show your baby a toy, then cover it — slowly at first — with a cloth or cup. Does your baby try to pull the cover off? What if you cover only part of the toy? Try different toys, and different covers.
- Play peek-a-boo to help baby learn that you come back when you go away. Sometimes cover your face, and sometimes cover his.
- If your baby doesn't play these games now, wait a few weeks and try again.

Steinberg, J., Riley, D., & Schatell, D. (2006). *Activities for babies*. (adapted). Parenting the First Year. University of Wisconsin-Extension Cooperative Extension, NCR publication No. 323

## Him or her?

*This series of newsletters gives equal time to both sexes. That's why we take turns referring to children as "him" or "her." Keep in mind that we are talking about all children when we use "him" or "her."*



The information in this newsletter describes an average child at each age. Because your child is unique, he may do things somewhat earlier or later than is indicated.

# Feeding Your Baby

## Expanding Your Baby's Food Offerings

The second half of the baby's first year of life is a time when her eating experience expands very rapidly. Until the age of six months breast milk or formula alone are able to meet your growing baby's nutritional and developmental needs. After the age of six months, introducing solids will help the baby not only meet her nutritional needs but also get her used to a variety of textures and flavors. This may lead to acceptance of a wider variety of flavors and foods in later childhood and may increase the likelihood of her trying new foods. After you start adding solid foods to a baby's diet, breast milk or iron-fortified infant formula should still be the only type of milk she drinks. Do not give cow's milk until she is 1 year old.

If you have already started your baby on cereal, she may be ready to try some different foods. But remember, you should still try single ingredient foods until you are sure that the baby tolerates them. Try a food for 2-4 days in a row, before introducing a new one. If you notice that the baby is getting a significant adverse reaction to the food, consult your health care provider. As you start your baby on fruits and vegetables, she may take only a few spoonfuls, but this experience is valuable, because she is learning that the food can come in many tastes and textures. While some experts recommend starting vegetables before fruits, the guidelines from the American Dietetic Association state that the order in which fruits and vegetables are introduced does not affect their acceptance by the baby.

Once your baby is used to eating several single ingredient foods, try mixing a couple of her favorites together (for example, pureed carrots with cereal.) Avoid products with added sugar (for example, baby food desserts) or salt.

## How Important is Juice?

Juices can be introduced in small amounts at this age – no more than 2-4 ounces per day of vitamin C rich 100% juices. Do not put juice in the bottle, offer it at mealtime in a cup. Discourage sipping juice over a long period of time. You may want to mix juice with water to make it less sweet and/or tart. Do not offer fruit juice at bed time. Do not offer fruit juice to treat diarrhea. If there is family history of allergy to orange or tomato juice, do not offer these until the child is one year old. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend eating whole fruits and cutting back on juices.



## Drinking from a Cup is Fun

By 6-9 months of age, many babies' show interest in drinking from a cup. Initially there are more spills, but if you let your baby keep trying, she will master this important skill. You can offer breast milk, formula, juice, or water in a child sized unbreakable cup. Covered cups with a spill-proof spout are helpful at this stage. The baby still needs to drink most of her milk from the breast or the bottle.

## Home-Made for the Baby!

- Making your own baby food is easy, inexpensive and a great way to introduce family meals to the baby.
- If you are serving steamed carrots for a meal, save some before you season them. Just puree them for the baby.
- As the baby gets older, you can start offering her mildly seasoned foods that your family eats. Just make sure the food is pureed for a 6-7 month old and mashed or cut into small pieces for an 8-10 month old.
- To learn more about making you own baby food visit <http://ohioline.osu.edu/mob-fact/0007.html>

## Baby Bottle Tooth Decay

Babies need dental care even before their teeth appear. This helps prevent Baby Bottle Tooth Decay – a condition often caused by keeping a bottle filled with milk or sugary drinks in the mouth for extended periods, for example, letting babies fall asleep with a bottle. Baby Bottle Tooth Decay is often noticed soon after baby's teeth appear. Here are some feeding related tips from the American Dental Association to help keep your baby's teeth healthy from the start. For more information, visit <http://www.ada.org>.

After each feeding, wipe the baby's gums with a clean gauze pad.

Never allow your child to fall asleep with a bottle containing milk, formula, fruit juice or sweetened liquids.

Avoid filling your child's bottle with liquids such as sugar water and soft drinks.

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Ohio State University Extension

American Dental Association. *Early Childhood Tooth Decay* (Baby Bottle Tooth Decay). Retrieved December 27, 2006 From [http://www.ada.org/public/topics/decay\\_childhood\\_faq.asp#4](http://www.ada.org/public/topics/decay_childhood_faq.asp#4)

## WARNING!

To prevent infant botulism honey should not be offered to babies under 1 year of age.

## Food Allergies and Food Sensitivities

The most common foods associated with allergic reaction include cow's milk, wheat, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, soy, fish and shellfish. Introduction of these well known allergens should be delayed until after the baby is over a year old by which time their immune and digestive systems have matured to handle these foods.

Some common allergic reactions to foods include rash, wheezing, diarrhea, and vomiting. Change in the color of stool after eating certain foods should not be a cause for alarm.

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### References:

American Dietetic Association. *Starting Solid Foods. Start Healthy – Stay Healthy Feeding Guidelines*. (2005). Retrieved December 27, 2006 from [http://www.eatright.org/ada/files/infant\\_book.pdf](http://www.eatright.org/ada/files/infant_book.pdf)

Butte N., et al. (2004). The Start Healthy Feeding Guidelines, *J of Am Diet Assoc.*, 104, No 3, 442-469.

Duyff RL. (2006) *The American Dietetic Association's Complete Food and Nutrition Guide* (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed). New York: John Wiley and CO.

***If you have any specific question's on infant feeding and would like to speak to a registered dietitian at the Cuyahoga County Board of Health, Nutrition Program, call 216-201-2000, Ext. 1526.***



# Just for Parents

## What is Your Baby Like?

You've probably noticed that baby has her own unique temperament or style of behavior. Research shows that babies' temperaments differ in these ways:

**Sensitivity:** Some babies react to very little stimulation (sounds, lights, touch, smells). Others can sleep through thunderstorms.

**Activity level:** Some babies are always wiggling and moving, while others spend more time sitting, watching or listening.

**Intensity:** Some babies whimper quietly if uncomfortable or hungry, while others cry loudly.

**Regularity:** Some babies get hungry or sleepy or mess their diapers about the same time each day. Others seldom do things at the same time.

**Adaptability.** Some babies adapt easily to new people, places, and things. Other babies are upset by changes, including shifts from one activity to another (like getting in or out of the bathtub) or by anything new; these babies need more time to get used to changes or new things.

**Persistence or frustration tolerance:** Some babies keep practicing an activity, while others are more easily frustrated.

**Soothability or distractibility:** Some babies are easy to distract and soothe when upset, while others are more difficult to distract.

Each temperament trait ranges from high to low. Baby's temperament is a combination of all these traits. All temperament styles are normal, but some combinations are more challenging for parents to handle.



Research shows that parents who understand their baby's temperament better handle normal, but challenging behaviors.

To better understand your baby's temperament you can fill out a free questionnaire at The Preventive Ounce web site ([www.preventiveoz.org](http://www.preventiveoz.org)). When you get to the web site click on Image of Your Child. After you complete and submit the questionnaire you will receive:

- Baby's temperament profile
- A forecast of likely behaviors
- Strategies for handling these behaviors that are tailored to your baby's temperament

Once you know your baby's temperament and what strategies work best for her, you can adjust your parenting to fit with baby's temperament. When there is a "good fit" between what you expect of baby and her temperament, baby can grow in a healthy way.

### ***If your baby has a challenging temperament remember these things:***

1. Baby was born with this temperament. You didn't cause it, and baby is not purposely being difficult.
2. Some of the behaviors you find challenging now may be helpful as baby grows up. For example, babies who adapt slowly to change may not be as easily influenced by peers when they're older. Babies who are hard to distract and soothe now may be able to focus on a task more easily when they're older.

Steinberg, J. Riley, D. (Revised 2006). Child guidance; discipline is teaching. Parenting the First Year. University of Wisconsin-Extension, NCR publication No. 321.

**BABIES ARE FOR HUGGING  
NOT SHAKING!**

**Bellflower tot-line 216-431-8200 will provide answers to your parenting questions.**

# Smooth Transition to Child Care

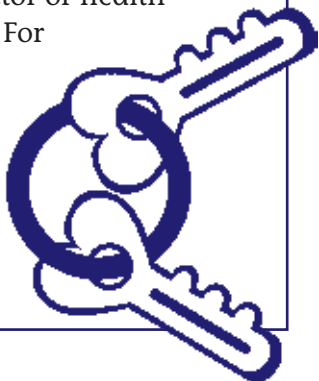
When it's time for baby to be cared for by someone in addition to Mom or Dad, help your child make a smooth transition to child care with these tips:

- ☺ Help your baby adjust slowly by spending time in the child care setting on the first visit. The program may want to phase your child in over a few weeks, with short stays to start and longer stays over time.
- ☺ A morning ritual in the new setting can increase your baby's comfort, such as always playing with him in an activity when you first arrive. Familiar items from home, such as a blanket or special stuffed animal can also help baby ease into the new setting.
- ☺ Remember that your feelings can be sensed by your baby. If you feel this setting and caregiver are OK, so will your baby.
- ☺ As your child gets older, talk about the fun things that he or she will do during the day and when you are together again.

If you would like more information about child care, call **Starting Point at 216-575-0061 or 1-800-880-0971.**

## Immunizations Are Important for Your Baby

Remember parents...it is important to take your baby to get all of his shots before age two. Follow your doctor or health care provider's schedule. For more information about immunizations, call the **Cuyahoga County Board of Health Department at 216-201-2000.**



# Safety Tips

## Toy Safety

Follow these general safety tips when choosing appropriate toys for your baby:

1. Look for labels that give age-appropriate recommendations.
2. Avoid toys with small parts, which may pose a choking hazard.
3. Look for sturdy construction, tightly secured eyes, noses or small parts.
4. For infants, avoid toys that have sharp edges or points.
5. Discard the plastic wrapping on toys immediately and keep wrapping out of your baby's reach.
6. Do not purchase electric toys with heating elements for children under 8 years old.
7. Inspect old and new toys regularly for jagged or sharp edges, or broken parts that might create a choking hazard.

For safety and recall resources call: **U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, (CPSC)**, Washington D.C. 20207, at **1-800-638-2772.**

You can also check the **CPSC** web page regularly at <http://www.cpsc.gov> to make sure that products have not been recalled.

## Selecting a Safe Toy Chest

1. Look for a toy chest that has a lid support that will hold the hinged lid open in any position in which it is placed or buy one with a detached lid or doors.
2. Look for a toy chest with ventilation holes that cannot be blocked if the chest is placed against the wall. When the toy chest lid is closed, there should be a gap between the lid and the sides of the chest.
3. Make sure the lid of the chest does not have any type of latch that could entrap a child.
4. If you have a toy chest or trunk with a free falling lid, remove the lid or install a spring-loaded lid support to avoid possible injury.

Source: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, The Safe Nursery. CPSC Document # 202. Available from <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/202.pdf>

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 9127 Miles Avenue  
 Cleveland, OH 44105-6136

Call any one of these Invest in Children partners below for support or information on how to make sure your child is healthy, well cared for and ready for school.

**Prenatal Hotline • 216-778-BABY**

Prenatal information and support for expectant mothers

**MomsFirst • 216-664-4194**

Prenatal care and support for expectant mothers in the City of Cleveland

**Help Me Grow • 216-736-4300**

Services and support for children prenatal to age three

**Healthy Start • 216-987-7346**

Health Insurance (Medicaid) for children prenatal to age nineteen

**Starting Point • 216-575-0061**

Child care services and information on care for children with special needs

**Family Help Line • 216-229-8800**

Free, anonymous support, information, referrals and crisis intervention

**Tot-Line • 216-431-8200**

Information on child development

**First Call For Help • 2-1-1 or 216-436-2000**

Free, confidential information and support for referrals to other local health or social services

*This newsletter is provided to parents by Help Me Grow of Cuyahoga County.*

*Help Me Grow is a statewide child development program and a partner of Invest in Children. As Cuyahoga County's early childhood initiative, Invest in Children works to increase the development, funding, visibility and impact of early childhood services in the county, so our children start kindergarten healthy, well cared for and ready for school.*



COMMISSIONERS  
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*If you have specific questions about your child's health or development, or concerns about your own health and well-being, please contact your physician.*