

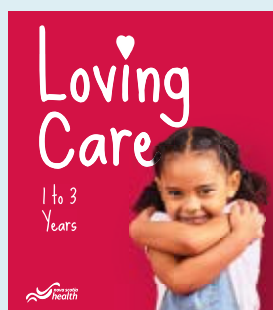
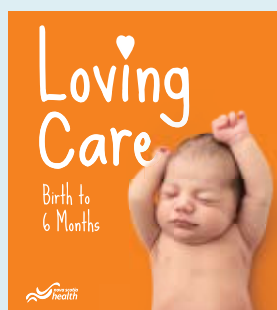
# Loving Care

6 to 12  
Months



**Loving Care** is a series of four books for parents of children from birth to age 3 developed by Nova Scotia’s Department of Health and Wellness and Nova Scotia Health. As a public health resource, **Loving Care** focuses on information that will help young families to protect, promote, or improve their health, and to prevent illness, injury or disability.

Three of the **Loving Care** books focus on babies and children at specific ages—**Birth to 6 Months**, **6 to 12 Months**, and **1 to 3 Years**. The fourth book—**Loving Care: Parents and Families**—offers information that will be useful to families whatever their child’s age. You’ll find references to **Parents and Families** in all of the other books.



Writing: Janis Wood Catano, Easy-to-Read Writing  
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The information in this book is up to date as of the date of printing. This information is not a substitute for the advice of a health professional.

# Introduction

Loving care is what every baby needs. It's what every parent wants to give.

**Loving Care** is the title of this series of books for parents. Each book gives information based on the age of your baby or child. We try to answer the questions you'll have as your tiny newborn grows into a busy toddler. This book gives you information about your baby from age 6 to 12 months.

Babies are born into many kinds of families. You may be on your own, married or in a relationship. You may be a parent by birth, surrogacy, adoption or fostering. You may have lots of family around or be far from home. You may have one baby, or two, or more!

Babies are raised by many different kinds of parents. You may be young or an older parent, able-bodied or living with a disability. You may be gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, pansexual, queer or straight. You may be male, female, transgender, two-spirit, intersex, non-binary, queer or cisgender. You may be Indigenous, new to Canada or from a family who's lived here for generations with Acadian, African, Asian, European, or Middle-Eastern roots.

This book is written for all the parents and families that make Nova Scotia a good place to live.

## *Did you know?*

Some people use the term “breasts” and some use “chest” to talk about their body. Similarly, the term “breastfeeding” can be used to explain a method of infant feeding, and some people use “chestfeeding”, “body feeding” or “nursing.” You can decide your own preferences and share them with your health care team.





## Double check

In **Loving Care** we use the term “health care provider” to mean professionals who offer primary health care services to parents and families.

As well, Public Health and many other professionals and community resources are available to offer advice and support.

You’ll find more information in the “**Welcome**” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

## Double check

Don’t forget about **Loving Care: Parents and Families**. It contains information that will continue to be helpful as your baby grows.



All babies need love and care. All kinds of parents and all kinds of families can give babies the love and care they need.

All parents wonder if they’ll be a good parent, if they’ll know what to do. You grow and learn as a parent by watching and listening to your baby. Your baby grows and learns with your love and support.

Life is a journey of discovery that you and your baby are taking together. No parent starts out having all the answers. Every day brings something new. You and your baby will both discover new skills and new strengths as you go along.

We hope these books will help you on your journey and will help you to make your own decisions about what’s best for you and your family.



## ***Did you know?***

The information in all of the **Loving Care** books applies mainly to healthy, full-term babies.

If your baby is premature or has special needs, you'll still find these books helpful. However, you may want to look for more information from your health care provider and other sources.

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# Attachment

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## Building love, trust, and confidence

You have been building a bond with your baby by consistently responding to their needs with love and care. You come when they cry. You feed them when they're hungry. You comfort them when they're cold, tired or lonely. You pay attention to their cues and try to figure out what they need. Responding in this way won't spoil your baby.

While you've been learning about your baby over the past months, they've been learning that they can count on you to be there when they need you. This helps your baby to build love, trust, and confidence. It helps them feel secure.

### ***Your baby will show their growing love, trust, and confidence by:***

- **Wanting to be close to you.** At this age, you may find that your baby wants to be close to you all the time.
- **Wanting you to hold and cuddle them.** Your baby needs as much love and cuddling as ever—maybe even more.
- **Responding to you.** Smiling when you smile, laughing and squealing when you play.
- **Looking to you for comfort.** You are the centre of your baby's world! They're beginning to understand that they need you and can count on you.

“My baby is really turning into their own person. They can be quite a little character! I've been responding to my baby the best way I know but they seem very clingy. Is that normal?”

Attachment influences the way your baby's brain develops. It affects how your baby will think, learn, feel, and behave for their whole life. As your baby grows, their attachment to you will mean that:

- They'll be more likely to come to you with their problems.
- They'll be better at controlling their feelings. For example, they'll be less likely to shout or hit when angry.
- They'll be more confident.

Babies understand feelings long before they understand words. A gentle voice and gentle handling will let your baby feel your love. Babies are very sensitive to angry voices and rough handling—like pushing, grabbing, or pulling. This can make it more difficult for your baby to form a bond with you.

**Your baby can't be too attached to you.** A strong attachment gives them the confidence they need to explore their world. It enables them to develop independence. A strong attachment allows them to let go because they know you'll always be there when they need you.



## Did you know?

Different cultures and ethnic groups have special activities and rituals. These offer opportunities for being close and building bonds between parent and baby. They can also build your child's pride in their culture and who they are. These kinds of rituals could include things like hair care, massage, songs or stories.

Think about the things that made you feel close to your own parents and culture when you were a child. Make these activities a special part of your baby's life.

## Did you know?

It's never too late to begin building bonds between you and your baby.

You may be adopting a baby or may have been separated from your baby for a while and wonder if you've missed your chance for attachment. You have not.

Responding to your baby's needs will build love and trust between you at any age.

Talk to your health care provider if you are concerned about your baby's attachment.



## Caution!

Don't give your baby a nickname you wouldn't want to have yourself, even if you're only joking.

An unkind nickname like “Piggy” or “Dummy” or “Chubby” might seem funny or cute when your baby is small. But nicknames have a way of sticking and it won't be funny when they're older.

It's also not helpful to give your baby a label—like telling your child or others that your child is “shy,” “difficult,” “picky,” or “bad”. These kinds of labels may make your baby feel bad about themselves as they get older.



## Temperament

By the time your baby is 6 months old, you'll have a pretty good idea about what they're like—that is, the kind of temperament they have. You'll know how active they are and how they react to new people and events. You'll know whether they usually wake up smiling or crying.

Parents have temperaments and personalities, too. Are you quiet or talkative? Are you easygoing? Or do you get upset when little things go wrong? Are you out-going or do you make friends slowly?

The kind of person you are can make it easier or more difficult for you to appreciate your baby's special qualities. For example, if you and your baby have the same kind of temperament, you may find it easy to understand their behaviour. If your temperament is different from your baby's, you may have to make more of an effort to understand and appreciate them.

You can't change your baby's temperament. But how you respond to them will make a difference in how they see themselves and the kind of person they become. If you see your child's qualities as special, they'll see themselves that way, too.

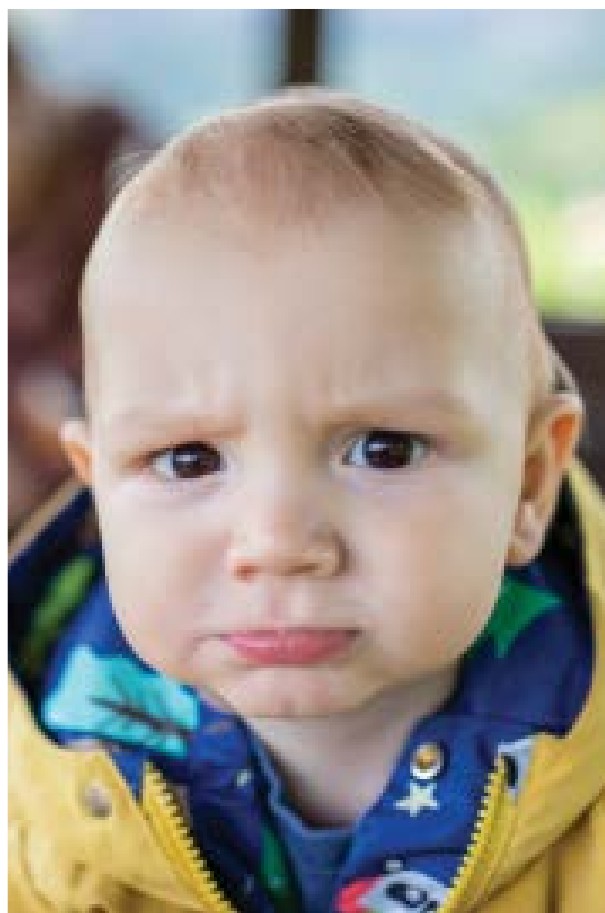
## Different temperaments

Your baby's temperament is something they were born with. It doesn't change. It's not the same as a mood that can change from day to day.

Their temperament affects how your baby reacts to the world and the people around them.

On the next pages, you'll find descriptions of 3 kinds of temperaments.

Most likely, your baby won't be exactly like any one of these three kinds of temperaments. But they may be most like one and the ideas on how to help them be their best may be helpful to you.



## Temperament 1

### If your baby...

- Is happy to sit or play quietly—is not very active
- Eats and sleeps at the same times every day
- Gets used to new people, places and activities easily
- Doesn't get upset often
- Whimpers quietly if wet or hungry
- Doesn't make a fuss when upset
- Doesn't cry often
- Is usually happy and smiles a lot

### You can help them be their best by...

- Spending time with them. They need to be played with and talked to even if they seem happy on their own.
- Paying close attention to their cues. They may be so quiet that you need to look closely to see what they need.
- Supporting their routines. Have regular mealtimes and bedtimes.
- Letting them enjoy other people. Find friends and relatives to spend time with them.

## Temperament 2

### If your baby...

- Is active—can sometimes sit quietly, but likes to move, too
- Usually—but not always—wants to eat and sleep at the same times every day
- Takes a while to get used to new people, places, and activities
- Clings to familiar people
- Gets upset if there's too much activity or excitement
- Cries when upset
- Takes some time to warm up before smiling

### You can help them be their best by...

- Giving them chances to play quietly and to be active.
- Encouraging their routines. Have regular mealtimes and bedtimes.
- Being patient. Give them time to get used to new things and new people. Don't rush or push them. Stay close so they'll know they're safe.
- Introducing new people slowly. Don't leave them with someone they don't know until your child has had a chance to get used to them.
- Watching for their cues that they're getting upset or over-excited. Move them to a quieter place.
- Responding when they cry.
- Smiling at them. Give them lots of reasons to smile back.

## Temperament 3

### If your baby...

- Is very active—twists and squirms. It's hard to keep them still long enough to change a diaper.
- Has a hard time settling into an eating and sleeping routine—wakes up often at night
- Has a very hard time getting used to new people, places, or activities. Does not like moving from one activity to another.
- Gets upset when they don't like something and lets everyone know it. Has a hard time calming down when upset.
- Cries loudly when wet, hungry or angry
- Is strong-willed
- Demands attention—will keep pushing to get what they want

### You can help them be their best by...

- Childproofing your home early. Your baby will probably move faster and sooner than others. You need to be ready to keep them safe.
- Developing routines. Have regular mealtimes and bedtimes. Gently help your baby get used to them. Find a quiet bedtime routine that helps them calm down.
- Allowing enough time for them to get used to new people and places. Let them know what's coming next. Give them time to get used to the idea.
- Accepting that your child will react strongly. Respond quickly and help them calm down. Stay calm. By staying calm you're teaching them to be calm.
- Giving your child the love, support, and attention they need. Be consistent.

## Your baby wants you to know...

You are the centre of my world. I need to know that you're near. I worry when I can't see you. I need you to hold me and respond to me. I need to know you love me just the way I am.





## ***Did you know?***

If your baby is premature or has special needs, they may develop skills at different times than other babies.

Talk to your health care provider about what to expect with your baby.



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“My baby has grown so much! They’re learning to do new things every day. What can I do to help them?”

## Developing skills

This is an exciting time! Your baby is growing stronger and is able to do more things day by day.

They’re getting better at using their hands. They’ll be learning to feed themselves with their fingers and to hold a spoon. They’ll be learning to hold and drink from a cup.

They’re becoming more mobile. Over the next few months, they’ll learn to crawl, to stand, and maybe to take their first steps.

They’re becoming more and more responsive to voices and faces. They’ll say their first words. They’re starting to learn about their world and the people in it.

Children develop new skills by building on what they’ve already learned. For example, first they learn to lift their head, then to push up on their arms, then to get up on all fours, then to crawl. Encourage your baby as they develop each new skill, but don’t rush them. Give them time to get comfortable with each skill before they move on to the next.

Every baby grows and develops new skills in their own way and in their own time. Children are very different in how fast they grow and at what age they develop new skills.

On the next few pages you'll find new skills your baby will be developing over the next few months. Don't be concerned if your baby can't do every one of these things at these times. Babies develop skills at slightly different times.

If you are concerned, see "When to wonder about your baby's development" on **page 26**.

Praise your baby's efforts as they try out new skills. Your baby depends on your love and support as they grow and develop.



# New skills to watch for between 6 and 9 months

*your baby will learn to...*



Get up on hands and knees.



Eat with fingers.



Sit up alone.



Stand with support.



Move around. Some babies crawl, some scoot on their tummy, some shuffle along on their bum.



Pass things from hand to hand.



Pick up small things with thumb and first finger.



Throw, wave, drop, and bang toys together.



Babble. This can almost sound like talking.



Shake their head “no.” Wave bye-bye.



Say “dada” and “mama.”  
Recognize the names of other family members.



Copy what you do—clap their hands, wave, and copy sounds you make.



Look for things when you show them to your baby. Let your baby watch you hide them—for example, under a cushion. If you hide something behind your back, your baby might crawl around you to find it.



Respond to other people’s feelings. They’ll know by the sound of your voice when you’re happy, sad or angry. They’ll smile when you’re happy. They’ll frown or look worried when you sound angry.



Recognize and be happy to see people they know. They’ll show you how much they love you by smiling or laughing when they see you.



Turn and look when you call their name.



Look to see where things go when they fall out of sight.

## New skills to watch for between 10 and 12 months

*your baby will learn to...*



Hold a spoon and a cup. Try to feed themselves. Drink from a cup with help. Hold, bite and chew on soft foods.



Take a few steps holding your hand or holding onto furniture or a push toy. Babies learn to walk best in soft shoes or bare feet.



Stand alone and bend over.



Clap hands.



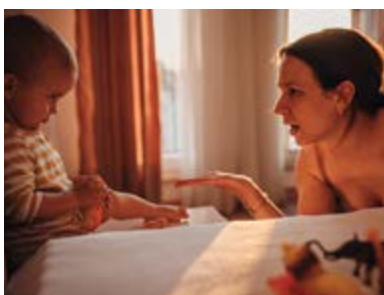
Take things out of a box or container.



Say one or two words. These might be hard to understand at first.



Begin to respond to simple requests—like, “More bananas?” or “Give it to me.”



Start to recognize the word “no.” Your baby might know what the word means, but is still too young to stop what they’re doing when they hear “no.”



Use actions to let you know what they want. They might hold out their arms to be picked up. Or might make the same sound or do the same thing over and over until you notice them.



Use exclamations, such as “Uh-oh!”



## Double check

As your baby starts to move around and to do more things, safety becomes an even bigger concern.

- You’ll find information on babyproofing your home on **pages 133–140**.
- You’ll find information on eating safely on **page 101**.

## Help your baby develop

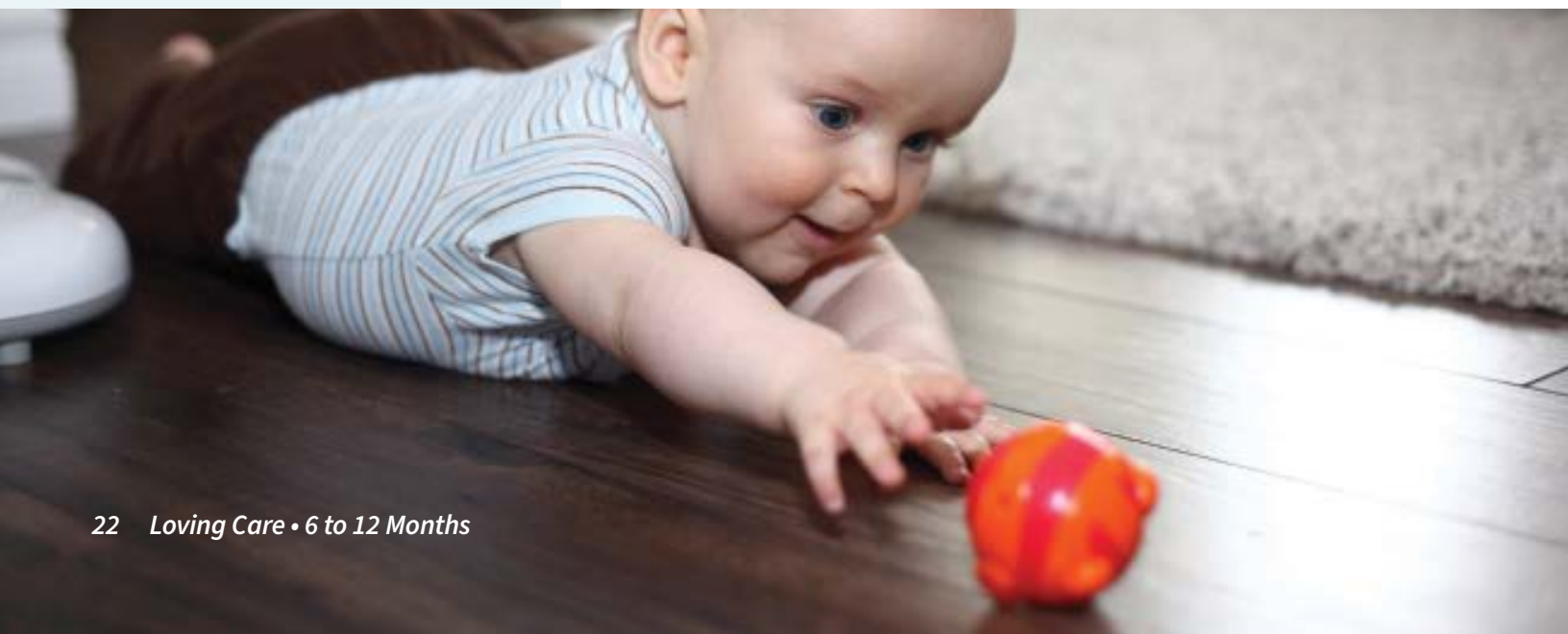
### Did you know?

Babies like to do things over and over. For example, your baby might drop their spoon onto the floor over and over. If you build a tower of blocks, they'll knock it down over and over.

Be patient and enjoy the action! This is how babies learn that they can make things happen!

### To help your baby develop their muscles:

- **Show them how to do things.** Show them how to drop toys into large pots or other containers. Show them how to dump toys out and put toys back in. Let them copy what you do.
- **Encourage them to move.** When they're on the floor, put toys just out of reach and encourage your child to move to get them. Put cushions on the floor for them to climb over. Lay on the floor and let them climb over you! When they start learning to walk, give them an upside-down laundry basket to push.
- **Give them lots of chances to use their fingers and hands.** Once your baby is eating solid foods, put small pieces of soft food in a bowl and let them pick out pieces to eat. Let them hold a spoon at mealtime. Give them toys that squirt water or make noise when squeezed.



### *To help your baby develop hearing and speech:*

- **Talk to your baby.** Describe everything you do and see. Use real words, not baby talk. Describe what they're hearing, seeing, feeling, and doing. "Now I'm washing your arm." "I'm kissing your toes." "You're holding the book." "Look at the red flower." "See the black kitty?" "Does your blanket feel soft?" Repeat the sounds your baby makes.
- **Sing to your baby.** Recite rhymes and poems. Read to them. Babies like to hear the same songs and stories over and over. It is a gift to your baby when you and others in your family talk and sing to them in different languages.

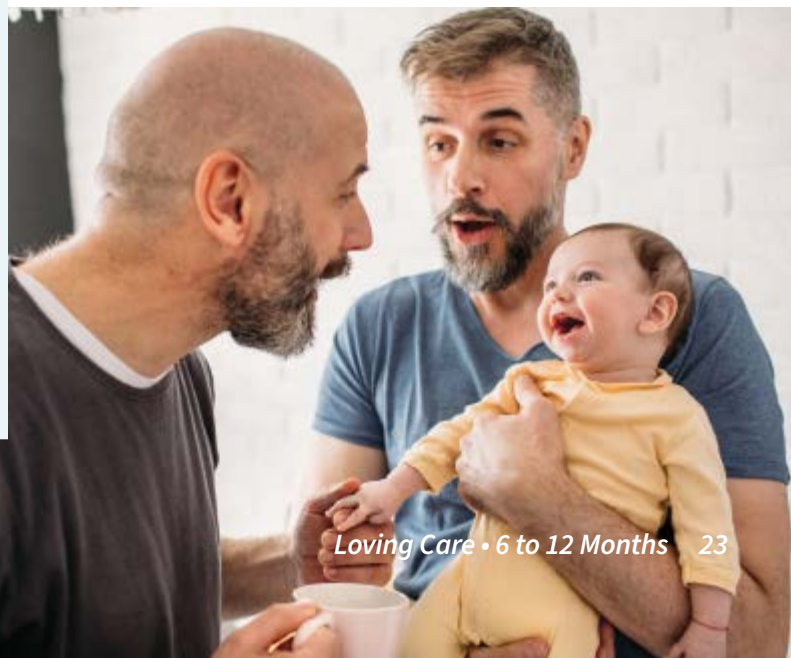
### *To help your baby develop social skills:*

- **Show your baby how to do things.** Clap hands, blow kisses, and wave bye-bye.
- **Respect their feelings.** Your baby is starting to notice that people are different. They'll be glad to see some people. They'll start to be shy with some people. Let them take their time. They'll decide for themselves who they like.
- **Interact with your baby.** Sit face-to-face when you play so they can see you smile and make faces. Copy their facial expressions and give them time to respond to yours.
- **Praise and encourage your baby.** Smile when you praise your baby. Say things like, "Good job getting your red ball!" and "Wow! You pulled yourself up!" Let them know that you notice and care about what they do.

### *Did you know?*

Don't rush your baby. Give them the time and support they need to grow and learn.

Development happens naturally as you play with and take care of your baby and other children. Including your other children when you play with your baby can be fun for everyone.



## You help your baby develop every day

Many of the things you do every day will help your baby develop. You don't always need to set aside special time to do special activities to help your baby develop. Often, a single activity will help your baby in many different ways.

### ***When you hold your baby on your lap and read to them:***

- You're helping them develop hearing and speaking skills.
- When you name the things they see in the pictures, you're helping them learn that words have meanings.
- When you let them hold the book and turn the pages, you're helping them learn to use the small muscles in their hands.
- You're helping them develop social skills by strengthening your attachment to one another.
- You're teaching them to love learning by showing them that reading is fun!



***When you play rhyming, clapping, and singing games:***

- You're helping your baby to learn new words by hearing them over and over.
- You're helping them learn about rhythm and rhyme.
- You're helping them develop muscle skills by doing simple hand motions.
- You're helping them develop social skills by learning that playing with others is fun!

Helping your baby learn new and exciting skills can be fun for you both!



***Did you know?***

Clapping, singing, rhyming, and moving games are so important to babies' development that every culture has some of its own!

You can share your culture with your baby by playing the games and singing the songs you knew as a child.

## When to wonder about your baby's development

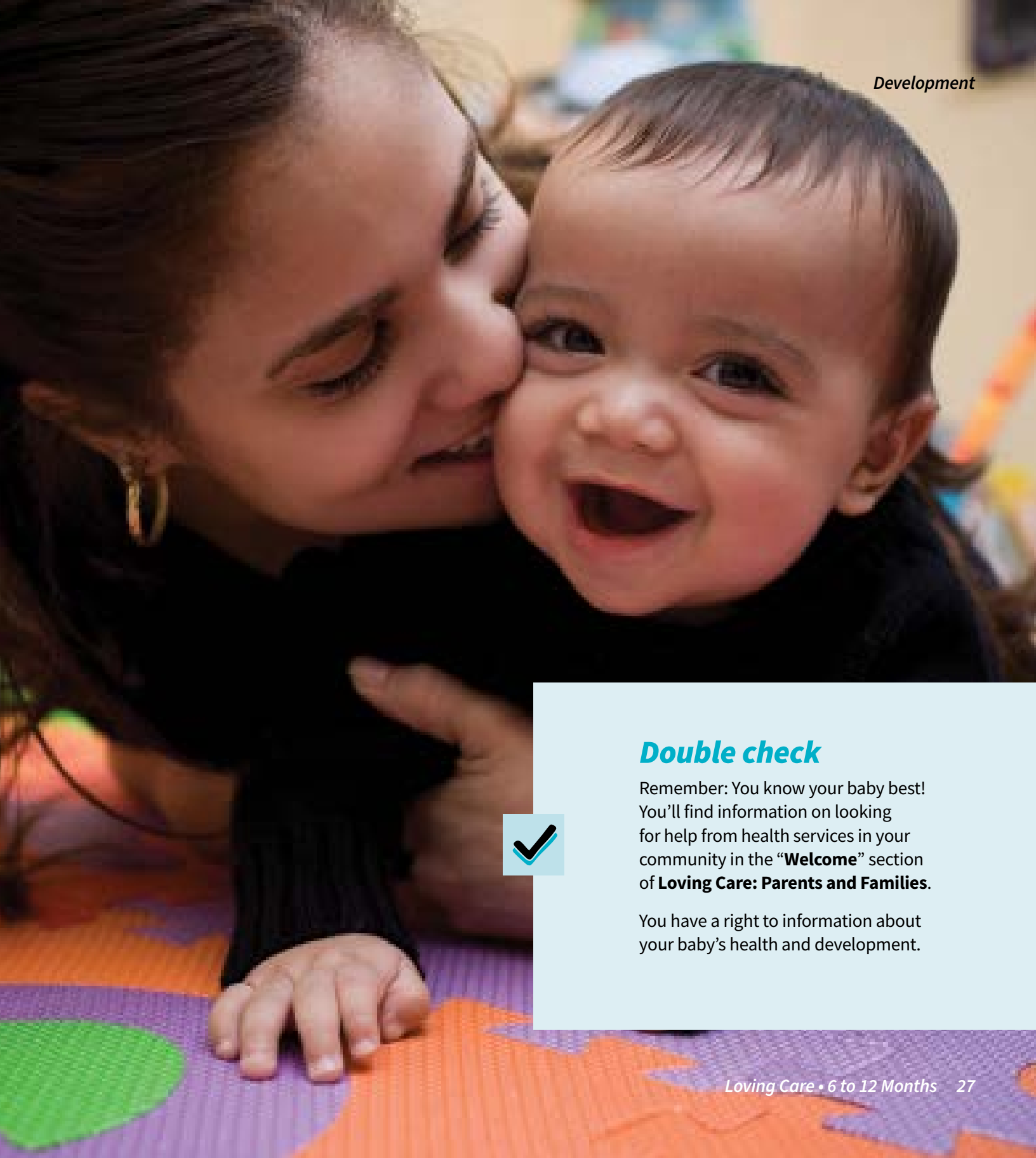
Between 6 and 12 months, most babies have developed a basic set of skills.

### ***Talk to a health care provider if by 12 months your baby:***

- Cannot sit by themselves
- Has not started crawling or scooting around the floor
- Cannot stand when you hold them up
- Isn't usually interested in playing peek-a-boo
- Doesn't usually smile back when you smile
- Doesn't usually laugh back when you laugh
- Doesn't babble. Doesn't say simple words like “mama”, “dada”, or “baba.”
- Doesn't look for toys that you hide while they watch
- Doesn't point to objects or pictures when you say their name

Trust your instincts. If you are concerned about your baby's development at any time, you can contact your local Public Health office (contact information, **page 148**), your health care provider, or Early Intervention Nova Scotia. (Contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).





### **Double check**

Remember: You know your baby best! You'll find information on looking for help from health services in your community in the **“Welcome”** section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

You have a right to information about your baby's health and development.

## It's too soon for toilet training

Most children aren't ready to learn to use the toilet until after age 2.

Your baby won't have the ability to hold back pee or poop until after they're 2.

Don't try to force your child to use the toilet before they're ready. If you try to teach your baby to do something that they're not old enough to learn, you'll both get frustrated and upset.

Be patient. Wait until after your baby's second birthday. By then, your toddler will be more ready to learn. Teaching them to use the toilet on their own will be easier for both of you.

### Did you know?

Teach your child that their body is private. It is a good idea to use the correct names for body parts including genitals and reproductive organs, such as "penis," "testicles," "scrotum," "anus," "vulva," "labia," "vagina," "clitoris," "uterus," and "ovaries".

Using correct names for body parts when your baby is young will mean that you do not have to change what you call these body parts later.

Knowing the correct names for body parts improves your child's body image, self-confidence, and their communication with you. It also gives children the language they need to tell a trusted adult if sexual abuse has happened.



***Your baby wants  
you to know...***

Talk to me! Play with me! Respond to me! Give me the time and attention I need to learn and grow.





# Play

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“How does playing help my baby? Is it still important for me to play with them? What can I do that will be fun for us both?”



## Play is important

Play is how babies learn about themselves, their world, and the people in it.

### *Play builds babies' brains in many ways:*

- **Play gives babies the chance to learn what their bodies can do:** hold, let go, reach, clap, wave, sit, move, crawl, and make sounds.
- **Play gives babies the chance to explore and learn about cause and effect.** What happens if I drop this rattle? Where does the toy go when it's under the blanket? If I climb over the pillow, will I get to you? Can I catch the ball rolling on the floor?
- **Play gives babies the chance to have fun with people who love them.** They learn new words, copy your smiles and actions, and begin to learn how to get along with others.

Play is good for the whole family! Healthy activities like going for walks together, visiting a park, or dancing around the room together are fun for everyone.

Play with your baby. Follow their cues.

Watch your baby's expression and listen to the sounds they make. These things will tell you how your baby is feeling while you play. Put these feelings into words for them— “You love singing!” “You're happy when we play together!”

The best time to play is when they're quiet and alert. When they're tired of playing, they'll show you by turning away or losing interest.

## Screen time

Babies learn best and have the most fun playing with people and exploring their world. Babies do NOT understand screens—they might be interested in colours and sounds, but screens do not help them to learn. Babies learn best through face-to-face interactions with parents and caregivers. Your baby develops best through live, interactive experiences with real people in real settings.

At this age, propping your baby in front of the TV won't teach them anything. They learn from exploring their world and by watching and playing with you. When you're busy, your baby will learn more being in a playpen or high chair where they can see what you're doing.

Screen time—with TV, tablets, phones, and computers—can't replace your love and attention.

Screen time can't replace the benefits your baby gets from playing.

The only good kind of screen time is interactive video chatting—like FaceTime or WhatsApp—when it's used to strengthen and maintain long-distance relationships with family and friends.

To help your child develop:

- **Do not allow any screen time, except for video chatting**, for children younger than 2 years old.
- **Avoid exposing your baby to background screens** by turning off the TV and other technology if no one is watching or if your baby is present in the room.
- **Be mindful of your screen use.** Focus on your baby to support their development. Turn off notifications or put your phone away during your time together.

You'll find more information on limiting screen time in the “**Families**” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



## Games and activities for you and your baby

### **Did you know?**

You can encourage your baby by being very clear about what you're praising. Say things like:

"You did it!"

"You put the ball in the basket!"

"You're trying hard to climb the cushion!"

When you praise your baby, smile and clap. Let them see and hear how proud you are.

Games and activities are fun for you and your baby. They also help your baby to learn. Babies learn by:

- Seeing something they want to do
- Trying to do it
- Doing it over and over

When you play with your baby, be sure they're looking at you when you start. Show them what to do. Give them a chance to copy you. Praise them for trying. Praise them when they succeed.

Learning takes time. Don't rush your baby. Play with them when they're alert and interested. Stop when they lose interest or turn away. Let your baby set the pace. If you try an activity and your baby isn't interested, wait a few days or weeks and try it again.



Babies like to play in different ways at different times.

- Sometimes they'll like active play—rolling, creeping, crawling and climbing, crawling through tunnels, and hiding under tables.
- Sometimes they enjoy quiet play—like songs and stories, being read to, or playing clapping games and peek-a-boo.
- Sometimes they like to play on their own—filling containers and dumping them out, banging toys together.

Try lots of different activities with your baby. Grandparents and Elders can be a good source for games, songs, and rhymes from your culture.

On the next pages you'll find a few games and activities to get you started. Follow your baby's cues. They'll let you know what they like best.



## ***Did you know?***

When you're playing with your baby, most of the time you're showing them what to do and they're copying you. It can be great fun for you both to switch this around.

When your baby is playing, let them take the lead and then copy whatever they do.

- If they clap their hands, clap along.
- If they crawl over a cushion, crawl after them.
- If they put lids in a container, put lids in too.
- If they bang lids together, bang with them.

## Games and activities for you and your baby—6 to 9 months

### Creeping crawlers

To help your baby strengthen their arms and legs:

1. Lay your baby on their tummy on the floor. Move in front of them so they can see you. Crawl. See if they try to copy you.
2. Gently support them in a crawling position on all fours. Let go. Trying to stay up on all fours will help their muscles get strong enough for crawling.
3. When they can stay up on their own, put a toy they like on the floor in front of them. This will encourage them to crawl toward it.



### Climbing and crawling

To help your baby practice crawling:

1. When your baby has started crawling, put some cushions and folded blankets on the floor.
2. Encourage your baby to crawl over and around them. Your baby may enjoy you crawling beside or behind them.



## Lots of lids

To help your baby learn to use their hands:

1. Collect lids from frozen juice containers and metal lids from jars. Use the kind of lids that pull off with no sharp edges, NOT the kind that open with a can opener.
2. Find a plastic or metal container with no sharp edges, like a margarine container.
3. Show your baby how to put the juice lids in the container. Let them watch you do it. See if they try to copy you. Be patient. There's no rush. If your baby would rather bang the lids together or play with them in another way, that's fine. Just wait a few days and try again.
4. Next, show your baby how to spill all the lids out, and start over.



Describe what you're doing while playing this game. Talk about how you're putting the lids into the container. Describe the noise they make, or how they spin or roll around.

## Did you know?

Your baby will enjoy playing with these lids for a long time, so keep collecting lids.

For example, when your baby gets a bit older, you can put simple, brightly coloured stickers on the lids. You can use them to teach them the names of the colours, animals, or shapes on the stickers.

You can put the same stickers on two or more lids and use these to help them learn about matching.

### **Row, row, row your boat**

To help your baby strengthen their body:

1. Sit on the floor with your legs long and your knees apart.
2. Sit your baby between your legs, facing you, so that their hands are near your knees.
3. Hold your baby's hands or shoulders. Gently rock back and forth while you sing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" or another familiar song.
4. When you get to the word DREAM, reach their hands up high.

### ***Did you know?***

Just in case you haven't heard this song in a while...

Row, row, row your boat,  
Gently down the stream,  
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily,  
Life is but a DREAM!



## Games and activities for you and your baby—10 to 12 months

### Cardboard tunnels

To help build your baby's muscles; to help them learn about ideas like under, through, in, and out:

1. Find a large box—bigger is better. **Check to be sure there are no staples or packing materials in the box.** The box should be at least big enough for your baby to crawl through.
2. Open the flaps on the ends of the box. Tape them to form a tunnel.
3. To keep the box from falling over, prop it with chairs on each side.
4. Show your baby how to crawl through the tunnel. Show them how to roll balls or trucks through.
5. While your baby is playing, describe what they're doing. For example, "You're crawling fast!" "You rolled the ball through the tunnel!" This will help them learn new words and ideas.

If you don't have a box, you can also make a tunnel by throwing a sheet over a table or over two chairs placed back to back.



### Read to me

To help your baby learn to like books; to help them learn to connect words with pictures; to make reading fun for parents and baby:

1. Collect children's books from friends, yard sales, or the library. Babies like plastic coated board books with simple, brightly coloured pictures.
2. Hold your baby on your lap. Let them turn the pages if they want to.
3. Point at the pictures and talk about them. For example: "That's a big green bird. Do you like the bird?" "I see a bear sitting in a tree. Can you point to the bear?"
4. Make up little stories for pictures your baby seems to like. For example: "Look, here's an orange cat, just like our neighbour has. The cat says meow. Can you say meow? Meow, meow."
5. Go at your baby's pace. The point is to give your baby a chance to have fun with books. You don't have to read the entire story or look at every page. Babies like to "read" the same books over and over.

Take books with you when you go out—on the bus, in the car, and to the health care provider's office. Find time every day to share books with your baby.



### Did you know?

Check out your local library or bookmobile for books and programs for babies. The librarian can suggest good books for your baby's age.

See **Loving Care: Parents and Families** for contact information.

### If you're happy and you know it

To help your baby learn the names of body parts; learn to move the right part of their body when they hear its name; and to give them a chance to have fun:

1. Sing the song and do the actions. Help your baby do the actions until they learn to do them on their own.

If you're happy and you know it,  
CLAP YOUR HANDS

If you're happy and you know it,  
CLAP YOUR HANDS

If you're happy and you know it,  
and you really want to show it  
If you're happy and you know it,  
CLAP YOUR HANDS!



2. Repeat, using different body parts in the song.  
For example:

If you're happy and you know it,  
TOUCH YOUR NOSE

If you're happy and you know it,  
KICK YOUR FEET

If you're happy and you know it,  
TOUCH YOUR EARS

If you're happy and you know it,  
PAT YOUR HEAD

If you're happy and you know it,  
RUB YOUR ELBOW

### *Did you know?*

Think about the songs you loved as a child.

Enjoy them again with your baby!

## Play

### Clapping

To help your baby learn to use their hands:

1. Clap your hands where your baby can see you.
2. Encourage them to clap on their own.

You can encourage clapping by clapping and cheering when your baby does something new or exciting.



### Building up and knocking down

To help your baby build muscles; develop coordination; and learn about cause and effect:

You can use tissue boxes, plastic containers, or wooden or soft blocks for this.

1. Sit on the floor with your baby.
2. Build a tower using 2 or 3 blocks.
3. Knock it over.
4. Let your baby try.





### Rolling ball

To help your baby play with others:

1. Sit on the floor facing your baby.
2. Roll a ball toward them.
3. Ask them to roll it back to you.
4. When they do, roll it toward them again, this time a little faster.

This can be fun for older siblings to play with the baby.

### *Did you know?*

Babies learn to talk by listening to the people around them.

- When you play with your baby, talk, talk, talk about what you and your baby are doing.
- “Talk” to your baby by repeating the sounds they make like “da, da, da,” or “ma, ma, ma.”
- Talk back and forth with your baby on a play phone.
- As you do everyday jobs—like cooking, cleaning, and shopping—describe them to your baby as you do them.

## Play

### Did you know?

It can be a good idea to put some toys away for a few days once in a while. Then, when you bring them back, they'll seem new to your baby.

Many Family Resource Centres have toy libraries where you can borrow toys. This is a good way to give your baby the chance to play with different toys. (Contact information for Family Resource Centres is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families.**)

### Your baby wants you to know...

Play with me! Help me learn about my world. I can learn more from you than from any other person or toy.

## Toys

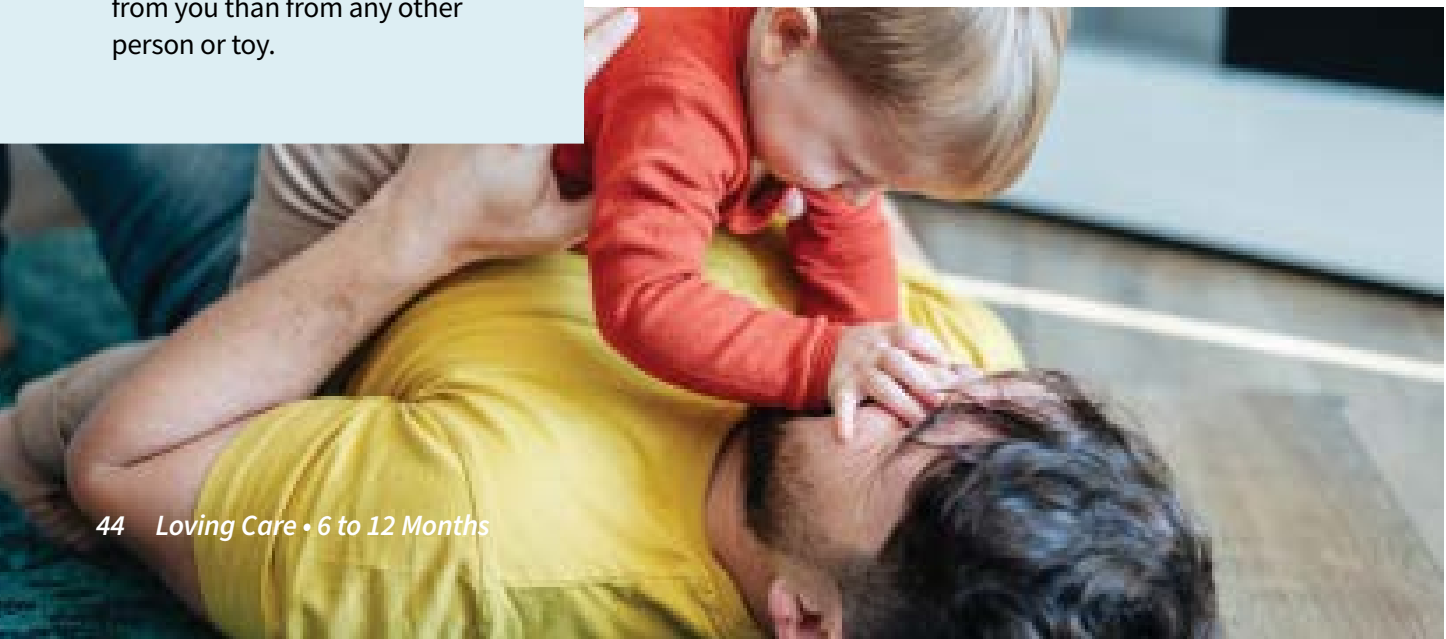
### You are still your baby's best "toy."

- You can talk, sing, and read to them.
- You can help them to sit, crawl, stand, and move around.
- You can show them how to clap and wave, how to put things in boxes and take them out, and how to crawl through tunnels.
- You can show them the world by telling them what they see when you take them for walks or grocery shopping.

What other toy can do all that?

At this age, your baby is curious about everything. They want to see, feel, hear, and taste everything. They want to do things and make things happen. They need toys that can help them explore.

Toys don't need to be expensive, or even store-bought. Lots of things in your home make fine toys for babies.



Your baby will enjoy:

- **Toys that make noise:** Pots and pans to bang, wooden spoons to hit them with, rattles to shake, squeaky toys to squeeze
- **Toys that move:** Balls to roll, cars to push
- **Toys to stack and nest:** Soft blocks to stack up and knock down, empty plastic containers to stack, measuring cups that fit inside one another
- **Toys to hold and squeeze:** Dolls, stuffed animals, soft books
- **Toys to crawl through and climb:** Big empty boxes to crawl through, firm cushions to climb over
- **Toys for bath time:** Toys that float, containers, funnels, squeeze bottles, cups



## Caution!

Everything your baby plays with should be safe, clean, and right for their age.

### Safe baby toys:

- Have no sharp points or edges.
- Have no small parts that could break or pull off.
- Are too big to swallow or choke on. Anything that can fit through a toilet paper roll is too small for your baby to play with.
- Are not too noisy. If a toy is loud enough that you have to raise your voice above the noise, it's too noisy for your baby.

Check your baby's toys often. Keep them clean. Carefully wash any household items you use as toys. Throw away broken or damaged toys.

If you buy toys second-hand or are given toys, check with Consumer Product Safety to be sure the toys haven't been recalled. (Contact information for Consumer Product Safety is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families.**)

See **pages 132 and 140** for more information about toy safety.







# Behaviour

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## Cues

Your baby was born with a set of built-in cues to let you know what they need. For example, they might suck on their fist or fingers when they're hungry. Or close their mouth when they're full.

When you respond to these cues, you are communicating with your baby. You are showing them that they have ways to let you know what they need. As your baby grows and is able to do more, their cues will change. They'll begin to develop new ways of communicating.

Your baby is still too young to be able to tell you what they need or to explain how they feel. They can only show you. Their behaviour is a way of communicating with you. When you respond to your baby, think: "What is my baby trying to tell me?"

**"My baby is changing so fast! I thought that as they got older, they'd be more independent, but they seem to be getting more clingy and afraid. And they're starting to get angry when they don't get their own way!"**





**Your baby will show they're happy and enjoying themselves by:**

- Turning, moving, or reaching toward you
- Looking at you with bright, wide eyes
- Clapping, laughing, squealing
- Touching, hugging, kissing
- Waving their arms and kicking their legs
- Pointing at what they want



**Your baby will show you they're unhappy, tired, or upset by:**

- Turning, looking, or moving away from you
- Arching their back, pushing away
- Frowning, pouting, sticking out their lower lip
- Fussing, crying, screaming, kicking

## Did you know?

It can be tiring and frustrating when your baby cries, clings, and wants you every minute. All parents need some help once in a while.

Try to find someone to help you—like a trusted friend or a relative—who can come on short notice when you need a break. Keep their phone number handy.

Talking to other parents can also be a big help. You'll find information about support for families in the “**Welcome**” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**. You can also call the Helpline to find out about supports in your community (contact information, **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).

## What to expect

Between 6 and 12 months, many parents notice a few big changes in the way their baby behaves.

- Your baby may not want to let you out of their sight.
- Your baby may become shy and afraid of strangers.
- Your baby may get upset and angry when they can't do something they want to do.

Parents are sometimes surprised by these changes but they are a natural and important part of your baby's development. Try to see things from your baby's point of view. This can help you understand what they're feeling and why they act the way they do.



## Your baby may not want to let you out of their sight

### What your baby is feeling

Your baby knows that you are the most important person in their life. They depend on you for everything. They have formed a strong bond with you. When they can't see you, they don't know where you are. They don't know if you'll come back. This is very scary for a baby. They'll cry for you when they can't see you.

This is a healthy part of your baby's development. It means that your baby is strongly attached to you. It means that they're learning how much they need you.

### What you can do

This can be very tiring for parents! Be patient. Your baby needs to learn that they can count on you to be there when they need you. They need to know that they can trust you to come back when you go away. This can take time.

## Did you know?

Don't feel guilty about leaving your baby to go out once in a while! You need some time to relax—by yourself, with your partner(s), or with friends.

And your baby needs to learn that when you go away, you **do** come back.

To help your baby feel safe and loved:

- **Give them as much love and time as you can.** Keep them near as much as possible. When they can crawl, let them follow you from room to room. This won't spoil them! When your baby gets the love they need, they'll feel safe. When they feel safe, they'll be able to become more independent.
- **Help them become attached to other people in their life.** Your baby needs other people, even if they don't know it. Encourage the other people your baby is comfortable with to give your baby lots of love and attention.
- **Don't sneak out on your baby.** It can be very hard to leave when your baby is screaming for you. It can seem easier to just sneak away when they're not looking and avoid the fuss. Don't do it. This will only teach your baby that they can't trust you. It will make them more worried when they can't see you. They'll cling to you more.

When you have to leave your baby, be sure they know the person you're leaving them with. Tell your baby “bye-bye” and that you'll be back soon. They'll still cry, but they'll also slowly learn to trust that you **will** come back.



## *Your baby may become shy and afraid of strangers*

### **What your baby is feeling**

Your baby knows they love **you**, but they're not so sure about other people anymore. They've learned that people are different. And there are some people they're more comfortable with than others.

Often what scares your baby isn't the new person. It's what the new person does. For example, would you like a stranger to come up to you on the street and hug you? Your baby doesn't like it much either. Remember that people you know—even relatives—may be strangers to your baby.

### **What you can do**

#### **Respect your baby's feelings.**

Give them time to get used to someone new. Let them meet new people while sitting safely on your lap or looking over your shoulder. When your baby is ready, they'll move toward anyone they want to go to.



## Your baby may get upset when they can't do what they want to do

### What your baby is feeling

Your baby is curious about everything. They want to try new things. It can be very frustrating for them when they can't do what they want to! And they let you know they're upset by crying, screaming, and kicking. This doesn't mean that your baby is bad. It's the only way they have to show you how they feel.

### What you can do

**Be calm.** The best thing you can do when your baby is upset and angry is to stay calm. Your baby is

much more likely to quiet down when you are calm and speak to them in a gentle voice. Ask yourself what your child is feeling. Put their feelings into words for them. For example, "You're upset!" or "You feel angry."

These strong feelings are new to your baby. They need you to be calm and in control when they're feeling out of control. When you get angry, it frightens your baby and makes things worse. No matter how upset your baby gets, never spank, shake, or yell at them.

There are several reasons why your baby might get frustrated:

- **Your baby wants to do something they're not yet able to do.** For example, they've learned to sit up by themselves, but they haven't yet learned how to go from sitting to crawling. They get stuck in one position.

If this is the case, help your baby learn the skill they need. Help them practice going from sitting to crawling.

- **You've stopped your baby from doing something that they want to do.** You can't let your baby do things that could hurt them or someone else, no matter how much they want to. Try distracting your baby with another interesting toy or activity. Try moving them to another place. Sometimes this doesn't work right away and your baby keeps crying. When this happens, tell them you understand how they feel. For example, "I know you want to play with the plastic bag, but it's not safe." Keep comforting them.



## Caution!

**Never shake, spank, or yell at your baby.**

**Shaking can hurt or kill your baby.**

**Spanking won't teach your baby to behave.** It will hurt and frighten them. It will teach them to be afraid of you. It will teach them that they can't trust you not to hurt them. It will teach them that it's okay for them to hit other people.

**Yelling won't teach your baby to behave either.** It will frighten them. It will teach them that it's okay for them to yell when they're angry or upset.

For information on handling stress and anger, see the "**Parents**" section in **Loving Care: Parents and Families.**

## Double check

Hang on to your temper!

Helping your baby learn and keeping them safe can be frustrating and tiring.

You'll find information on managing stress and anger in the “**Parents**” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



## Double check

You'll find information on babyproofing your home on **pages 133–140**.

## Double check

You'll find information on pet safety in the “**Families**” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

# Discipline: loving guidance

Discipline is never about punishment. The word “discipline” means teaching.

At this age, discipline is loving guidance that keeps your baby safe and helps them learn. This means being patient, gentle, and consistent as you set limits and help your baby handle their feelings. Your baby may not always be happy about this, but keeping them safe and helping them learn is your job.

There's no point in making rules for babies. They are too young to understand them or to follow them. Babies learn bit by bit, over time. You won't spoil your baby by being patient, gentle, and consistent.

### To keep your baby safe and help them learn:

- **Be patient.** This is an exciting time. Your baby is learning new things every day—like when they drop a spoon, it makes a noise. Babies learn by doing the same thing over and over. When you understand this, it can be easier to be patient and help them learn.



- **Be consistent.** Don't keep changing your mind about what your baby can and can't do. It's very hard for a baby to learn if what you expect of them keeps changing. It's also helpful when all your baby's caregivers—parents, grandparents, and others— treat your baby in the same way.

Babies also need consistency in their day-to-day life. They need regular routines. They need to know what to expect. This kind of consistency helps them feel secure and feeling secure helps them learn.

- **Be gentle.** If your baby is reaching for something dangerous, don't slap their hands. Hold them gently and move away. Say, "hot" or "ouch" to let them know about the danger. And be gentle when you speak to your baby. Babies are very sensitive to your tone of voice and angry voices frighten them.

- **Help your baby begin to learn warning words.** Don't always say "no." If you say "no" too often, your baby may stop listening to it. Use words like "hot," "yucky," "ouch," "stop," and "wait." Help your baby learn these words and what they mean.
- **Respond to your baby.** Your baby wants your attention, love, hugs, and smiles more than anything. Praise them when they learn new things. Praise them for trying. Be specific when you praise. "Yay! You've learned to blow a kiss!" "You did it! You put the block in the bucket!" "Good try!"

## Did you know?

You are your baby's first teacher.

How you treat your baby teaches your baby how to treat you and other people.

If you are calm and patient, even when you feel stressed or upset, your baby will learn to act this way.

If you lose your temper and yell, your baby will learn that this is the way to act when they feel stressed or frustrated.



## *Behaviour*

- **Make your home safe.** Your baby needs to explore. They need to see and do new things. Make their world safe so they can't get hurt and so you won't have to say "no" so often.
- **Help your baby get the rest and food they need.** Babies are often unhappy when they are tired or hungry. Be sure your baby is well rested and not hungry when you take them out. Try to stick to their regular times for eating and sleeping.
- **Give your baby other things to do.** If your baby is doing something dangerous or wants something they can't have, distract them with another activity.
- **Help your baby learn how to do things.** For example, if your baby hits the dog, show them how to pet gently. Show and tell them how to do things. "Chairs are for sitting on." "Sand is for scooping."



## ***Your baby wants you to know...***

Be patient with me. Give me the time I need to learn I can trust you and other people. Give me the time I need to explore and understand my world.

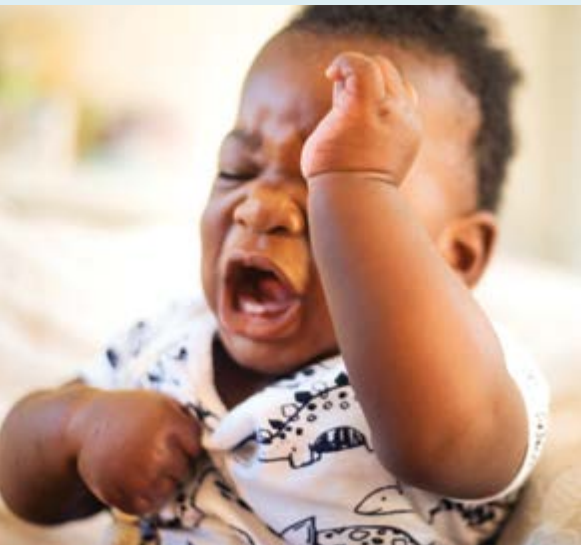




# Sleep

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“My baby seems to be having a harder time settling down to sleep. And they wake up at night and cry for me. What can I do?”



## **Caution!**

Hold your baby during feedings.

Never prop a bottle or a sippy cup. Never put your baby or toddler to bed with a bottle or a sippy cup.

This can cause ear infections and choking. It can also cause early childhood tooth decay. (See **pages 118–121**).



# Sleep

Babies need their sleep! A tired baby is a fussy baby.

Most babies 6 to 12 months old need 12 to 14 hours of sleep every day. Your baby may sleep more or less than this.

Most babies still take a nap in the morning and another in the afternoon. But some don't. Every baby is different.

Many parents notice that at about 6 months, their baby's sleep patterns change. For example, their baby may have more trouble settling down to sleep. Or their baby might have trouble falling back to sleep when they wake up at night. These changes in sleep patterns are a normal part of your baby's development.

It's not common for babies this age to sleep through the night. It's normal for breastfed babies to need a feeding during the night, either because they're hungry or they need comfort. If you're feeding your baby with infant formula, they may also need a feeding during the night.

In this section, you'll find information to help you with parenting your baby during the night. Most parents get lots of advice from family and friends about where babies should sleep, how much sleep they need, and how they should respond when their baby wakes up at night. What you do should depend on what works for you, your baby, and your family.

# Helping your baby sleep

There are several things you can do to help your baby settle down to sleep.

- **Have a regular daily schedule.**

This means:

- Getting up at about the same time every day
- Having meals, naps, and play times at about the same time every day
- Going to bed at about the same time every night

Babies like to know what to expect every day and this kind of routine helps them get used to sleeping and being awake at regular times. Make an effort to stick to this routine even when you have visitors or are away from home.

## Did you know?

Turn off the lights and TV in the room where your baby sleeps.

Light and noise can make it harder for your baby to get the rest they need.

- **Have a routine for bedtimes and naps.**

Do the same things, in the same order every day at bedtime. A routine at naptime will help your baby settle down to sleep during the day.

A bedtime routine should be quiet and calming. It could include: a feeding, a bath and tooth brushing, a massage or quiet play, a bedtime story or song, a goodnight kiss, and lights out.

You and your baby will find a routine that works for you. What matters is that your routine calms your baby, stays the same, and happens at about the same time every day.

Bedtime routines work best when everyone who cares for your baby knows and follows them.

It's the same for naptime routines. They can be very simple—a feeding, a cuddle, and a kiss. Find a routine that works for you. Do it at about the same time and the same way every day.

- **Watch your baby's cues.**

Bedtime and naptime routines work best when you plan them for times when your baby is starting to get tired. Your baby will let you know when they're tired. They might rub their eyes or yawn. They might become less active or less interested in what's going on. They might get very quiet. They might get fussy, cranky, or whiny.



## *Sleep*

### ***Did you know?***

Nap times are important!

Making sure your baby gets naps during the day will help them sleep at night.

Babies can have a hard time falling asleep at night because they are **too** tired.



## Safer sleep

Following safer sleep practices can reduce the risk of SIDS.

SIDS — Sudden Infant Death Syndrome or Crib Death — is the sudden death of a baby who seemed perfectly healthy. SIDS is the most common cause of death in babies' first year of life. Babies born premature and babies born with low birth weights are at a higher risk of SIDS. SIDS usually happens while the baby is sleeping. No one knows what causes SIDS. But there are things that parents can do to make SIDS less likely. Since parents started following these suggestions, the number of babies dying from SIDS in Canada has been cut almost in half.

SIDS is LESS LIKELY to happen when:

- **Babies sleep on their back.** Always put your baby on their back to sleep.
- **Babies room-share** while sleeping in a crib, cradle, or bassinet within arm's reach of your bed for the **first six months**.
- **The crib, cradle, or bassinet has a firm mattress.**
- **There is nothing in the crib, cradle, or bassinet except the mattress and baby.** Pillows, comforters, stuffed toys, or bumper pads in cribs, cradles, or bassinets can increase the chance of a baby suffocating.
- **Babies are breastfed.** Breastfeeding for at least 2 months will lower the risk of SIDS by about half. Your baby will get the protective effect from breastmilk, even if you only breastfeed some of the time. The longer you can breastfeed, the more protection your baby will have.
- **Babies are offered a soother at naptime and bedtime.** Consider waiting to offer the soother until your baby has learned to breastfeed with a deep latch. Babies often learn how to breastfeed well in the first 4 to 6 weeks. You know your baby best. Using a soother as your baby is learning to breastfeed may create challenges with breastfeeding. Soother use has also been linked to earlier weaning from breastfeeding.
- **Babies live in a smoke-free home.**
- **Babies are not covered with a blanket.** Blankets can accidentally cover your baby's mouth and nose, causing a suffocation risk.
- You keep your baby's temperature comfortable at night by dressing them in **one layer of clothing**, such as a sleeper, instead of putting a blanket on them.



Sleep

- **Babies are not too hot, overdressed, swaddled, or bundled.** It is best not to swaddle your baby overnight or when they are unattended, as swaddling can be a suffocation risk and a risk of overheating. Using a sleep sack is a safer option than swaddling your baby, however it is safest to have your baby sleep in one layer of clothing, such as a sleeper.

## Caution!

Never leave your baby alone if they fall asleep in a car seat, stroller, baby swing, baby bouncer, or any other infant equipment.

Watch your baby closely when they fall asleep sitting up. There is a risk that your baby's head can fall forward and block their breathing if they sleep while sitting up.

It is NOT SAFE to use a car seat, swing, or stroller as a sleep space.

If you can't watch your baby closely, move your baby to their safe sleep space.



There has been a lot of research on whether having your baby sleep in your bed with you is safe.

Sleeping in the same bed as your baby is called “bed-sharing” or sometimes “co-sleeping”. In this book, we call it bed-sharing. Recent research has shown that bed-sharing may increase the risk of SIDS, and therefore is not recommended. You should not sleep with your baby in your bed. Babies can fall off, get trapped under the sheets, blankets, or pillows, get rolled on, overheat, or suffocate.

When breastfeeding, parents often find it easier to bring the baby into the bed for the nighttime feedings. Nighttime feedings are important for your baby's growth and development. Bringing your baby into bed to breastfeed is safe and recommended as long as you return them to their crib, cradle, or bassinet after the feeding and before you go back to sleep. Remember to place them on their back, without blankets, pillows, stuffed toys, or bumper pads.

While bed-sharing is never recommended, it is **ESPECIALLY not safe** if you sleep with your baby on a sofa, armchair, or recliner. Babies can fall off or get stuck between the cushions and the back of the sofa.

**Bed-sharing is ESPECIALLY not safe** if you (or any other person in bed) smoke — even if you never smoke in bed. If you smoked during pregnancy or after the baby’s birth, it increases the risk of SIDS.

**Bed-sharing is ESPECIALLY not safe** if you allow pets or other children to sleep with your baby.

**Bed-sharing is ESPECIALLY not safe** if you or any other person in the bed:

- Might find it hard to respond to your baby for any reason
- Are so tired that you might have trouble waking up when your baby cries
- Have an illness or condition that could affect your ability to respond to your baby
- Have taken medicine that could make you sleepy
- Have had alcohol, cannabis, or other drugs



## **Double check**

See **page 123** for more information on a smoke-free home and car.

## **Double check**

See **pages 128–131** for more information on baby furniture, such as strollers, cribs, bassinets, baby slings, and sleep sacks.

## **Did you know?**

For more information on safe sleep, contact your local Public Health office or read the Public Health Agency of Canada’s document “**Safe Sleep for your Baby**”. Contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

### ***Bed-sharing risk reduction tips***

Even if you understand the serious risks of bed-sharing, there may be times that you still bed-share with your baby. This may be unplanned, for example, if you accidentally fall asleep while breastfeeding your baby in your bed. Or you may still decide to bed-share—as a parent it is your right to choose. Bed-sharing can be dangerous for your baby, so if you still decide to bed-share use the following steps to decrease the risk as much as possible:

- Always put your baby on their back.
- Have a firm, flat, and clean sleep surface. Do not bed-share on a waterbed, pillow top, feather bed, air mattress, sagging mattress, or soft memory foam mattress.
- Put your mattress on the floor to reduce the risk of falls. Make sure the mattress is away from walls and there is space around the bed so your baby cannot get trapped between the mattress and the wall or bedside table.
- Keep soft loose bedding or other objects far away from your baby. Pillows, duvets and heavy blankets can increase your baby’s chance of suffocation and getting tangled.
- Dress your baby in a one-layer sleeper so they are at less risk of overheating.
- Do not swaddle your baby.

- Sleep in a “C” shape —lay on your side, facing the baby, with your knees drawn up under the baby’s feet and your arm above the baby’s head. This protects the baby from moving down under the covers or up under the pillow. This “C” shape position is also known as the lying-down position for breastfeeding. You can see what the lying-down position looks like in **Breastfeeding Basics**. You can get a copy from your local Public Health office (contact information, **page 148**).
- Have your baby sleep on the side of the bed, instead of between adults. Any adults in the bed need to be aware that the baby is in the bed. All adults need to be comfortable with this decision to bed-share and be aware of the risks.
- If any adult in the bed has long hair, make sure it is tied back so that it can’t get tangled around the baby’s neck.
- Never leave the baby alone in the bed. Adult beds are not designed to keep babies safe.
- Never bed-share if you meet any of the conditions that make **bed-sharing ESPECIALLY not safe**. See **pages 64–65** for a list of conditions.



## Moving your baby to another room

Over time, your baby will gradually make the move to sleeping in another room. There is no hurry for this. Do what works best for you and your baby.

It's not always easy for a baby to get used to sleeping in a different room. You are the most important person in your baby's life and they worry when they can't see you. When they wake up alone, they may need to see you before they can relax and go back to sleep.

### **There are several things you can do to help your baby fall asleep in a separate room:**

- Lay your baby in their crib when they are drowsy, but still awake.
- Try to make the sleeping area quiet with dimmed lights.
- Some babies like soft music or a mobile over their bed to look at.

It is common to wake up several times during the night. Most of the time we put ourselves back to sleep so quickly that we don't even remember we've been awake. Your baby may do this too — they may soothe themselves back to sleep without needing any additional comfort from you.



### **Caution!**

Remove mobiles from the crib as soon as your baby can sit up by themselves.

### **Did you know?**

You may have heard that you can “spoil” your baby by responding to them too quickly when they cry instead of letting them “cry it out”. Current research shows that letting your child “cry it out” can be harmful to you and your baby and is not recommended. You will not “spoil” your baby by responding and comforting them when they cry.

## Sleep

Your baby's self-soothing is not meant to replace your response when your baby needs you for any reason, including for comfort. If your baby wakes at night and is crying, respond by comforting and soothing them. When babies are actively crying, they can't soothe themselves and need your comfort. The longer they cry, the more upset they get and the harder it is for them to go back to sleep.

You can comfort your baby by stroking their forehead or talking softly to let them know you're there. When parents comfort and soothe their baby, it leads to greater self-esteem for the child. Every time that you respond to your baby by comforting them or soothing them, you are teaching them that their needs will always be met. Over time, your baby will learn how to fall back to sleep with less help from you.

*Safe sleep text adapted/reproduced with permission from Safer Sleep for My Baby and Safe Sleeping for Babies. Copyright Province of British Columbia. All rights reserved.*

## Did you know?

Learn your baby's cues.

Many babies still need to be fed during the night. Pay attention to your baby's cues so you can tell when they're hungry.

For many breastfed babies, breastfeeding is an important source of comfort as well as nourishment. Follow your instincts and your baby's cues to give them what they need to soothe themselves back to sleep.



## Caution!

**DO NOT** put your baby to bed with a bottle or sippy cup. This can cause ear infections, choking and tooth decay.

## Did you know?

Your baby's sleep patterns may change when they are sick or teething. If your baby is sick, pick them up and comfort them. A sick baby needs care day or night.

You'll find information on how to soothe a teething baby on **page 122**.



## ***Your baby wants you to know...***

Help me get the sleep I need. Comfort me and come when I call. Let me know you're still there.







# Food

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“My baby is growing so fast! Are they ready for solid food?”



## ***Did you know?***

Try not to compare your baby to other babies. Healthy babies come in all weights, shapes, and sizes. They grow and gain weight at different rates.

## ***Is it too soon for solid food?***

Parents often feel pressure to give their baby solid food. Babies will be ready for solid food at around 6 months of age.

When you give your baby solid food too soon, it fills their tummy. It makes them too full to drink much breastmilk. This means that you will make less and your baby will not get enough breastmilk to give them the nourishment they need to support growth and development.

Six months may be later than the age you were when your parents first gave you solid foods. It may be different from what others tell you.

But there are good reasons to wait until 6 months.

- By 6 months, babies' bodies are ready to digest solid food.
- By 6 months, babies begin learning how to move food from the front to the back of their mouth, and how to chew and pick up solid food.
- By 6 months, babies need solid foods that contain iron for growth and development.

## ***Did you know?***

Your baby doesn't need to have teeth to be ready to try solid food!

## ***Did you know?***

Giving your baby solid food will not help them sleep through the night.

Giving a baby solid food early does not mean they are more mature or are developing faster than other babies.

### **Signs that your baby is ready for solid foods include:**

- Holding their head up with good head and neck control
- Sitting up with little help
- Showing interest in food when others are eating
- Picking up food and trying to put it in their mouth
- Opening their mouth wide when food is offered
- Showing you that they don't want food by turning their head away, keeping their mouth closed, or pushing the food away

When your baby can do most of these things, they're ready to start solid foods.

Talk to your health care provider if you're not sure if your baby is ready for solid foods or if you're worried because your baby isn't eating solid foods.



## Did you know?

Some of the information in this section may be new to you. It may be different from the way you were fed or how you've fed your other children. It may be different from the way your culture introduces solid foods.

All of the advice in this section is based on recommendations from Health Canada, the Canadian Paediatric Society, Dietitians of Canada and the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada.

## How should I introduce solid food?

This is an exciting time for your baby! They'll taste new flavours, feel new textures, and discover new foods.

This is when they begin learning to enjoy the foods their family likes. This is when they start to develop feelings about food and eating that will last a lifetime.

**From the first time you offer your baby solid food, your goal is to help them develop positive and healthy attitudes toward food.** This means that your baby:

- Knows when they're hungry
- Knows when they're full
- Knows that how much they eat is up to them





**The key to developing healthy attitudes toward food is to let your baby know from the start that they are in charge of how much they eat.**

Until about 12 months, your baby will still be getting most of their nourishment from breastmilk or formula. Your baby may not eat much solid food at first, but you can trust your baby to know how much to eat. Babies know when they're hungry and when they're full.

Before introducing solid foods at 6 months, you are responsible for what you feed your baby (either breastmilk or formula) and your baby is responsible for how much, when and where they eat.

As your baby gets older and you start to introduce solid food:

**You decide** what food to offer, where and at what times to offer food to your baby.

**Your baby decides** which foods they eat, how much they eat, and whether or not they eat.

At every stage, your baby will decide how much they eat and if they eat at all.

## *Did you know?*

Continue to breastfeed for as long as you and your baby enjoy it. Nova Scotia Health, Health Canada, the Canadian Paediatric Society, and the World Health Organization all recommend breastfeeding up to two years and beyond, as long as you and baby want to continue.

## *Did you know?*

Responsive feeding means understanding and responding to your child's hunger and fullness cues. Responsive feeding helps create a supportive environment where children can try new foods and textures, learn to enjoy a variety of foods, learn to develop preferences for nutritious foods, and build a positive relationship with food.

Between 6 and 12 months, your baby is learning a lot about food and eating. They'll learn to:

- Move food from the front of their tongue to the back of their tongue
- Gum and chew food
- Pick up food
- Feed themselves with their fingers
- Hold a spoon

This is a lot to learn! So take your time. Don't rush or force the process. Sometimes it can take a few tries before your baby will accept a new food. Discovering new tastes and textures can be exciting and fun for your child. One of the best ways to help your baby develop healthy attitudes toward food and eating is to relax and enjoy the process yourself.



### **Did you know?**

When offering your baby food from a spoon, be sure to let your baby lean forward and eat the food, rather than placing the food in their mouth.

### **Did you know?**

You may have heard of “baby-led weaning” as a way to introduce solid foods to babies. This involves letting your baby feed themselves using only finger foods, and not offering purées on a spoon. This term began in the United Kingdom where the word “weaning” means the first time that babies start eating solid food. Baby-led weaning does NOT mean stopping breastfeeding.

This approach is NOT the same as “baby-led feeding” (BLF). Baby-led feeding is a common term used in Canada that means a way of introducing solid foods by letting babies take the lead on feeding. This can involve giving your baby a spoon with food on it and letting them feed themselves, and offering soft foods to pick up with their hands. The information in this book follows Health Canada’s recommendations for letting your baby take the lead and safely introducing solids.

## How to offer your baby solid food for the first time

Choose a feeding method for your baby that works best for you and your family. You do not have to choose one way of feeding your baby over another. You can offer your baby food from a spoon and also offer soft foods for them to pick up and feed themselves. No matter how you choose to introduce solid foods, feeding will always be baby-led when you follow your baby's hunger and fullness cues.

Every baby is different, and what works for one might not work for another. The goal is to help your baby eat responsively by letting them respond to their own hunger and fullness cues in a way that feels safe for them, while encouraging healthy eating habits. Be patient and flexible as your baby learns to eat.

### **Did you know?**

Sitting face-to-face while your baby is eating helps you connect with your baby. Facing your baby allows you to make eye contact and see your baby's cues.

Mealtimes can be a time of learning and love for you and your baby. Talk to your baby about the colours, tastes, and textures of the food they're eating. Relaxed and happy mealtimes will help them to learn to enjoy food and eating.

From the first time you offer your baby puréed, smooth, or mashed food using a spoon you can also give them soft foods to pick up with their hands. This will help them learn to feed themselves and get used to different textures of food. Remember, your baby is in charge of how much or little they eat.

When your baby is ready for solid foods, start slowly. Watch for your baby's cues for how much to feed. Start by offering a few teaspoons or bites of food. Your baby will let you know when they are ready to eat more. You can begin by introducing solid foods once a day and gradually increase the number of times you offer solid foods depending on your baby's cues. A good time to offer solids is when your baby is hungry—this could be either before or after feeding breastmilk or formula.

Be patient. This is the first time your baby is experiencing solid food.

When starting solids, your baby may push the food out of their mouth with their tongue at first. This tongue reflex is natural, and it does not mean that your baby is not ready to start solids or that they dislike the food. Continuing to offer a variety of foods and letting your baby regularly feed themselves helps them learn how to eat. With practice, they will learn to move food in their mouth from side to side to help them chew. Trust your baby to know how much to eat. Never force food into your baby's mouth.

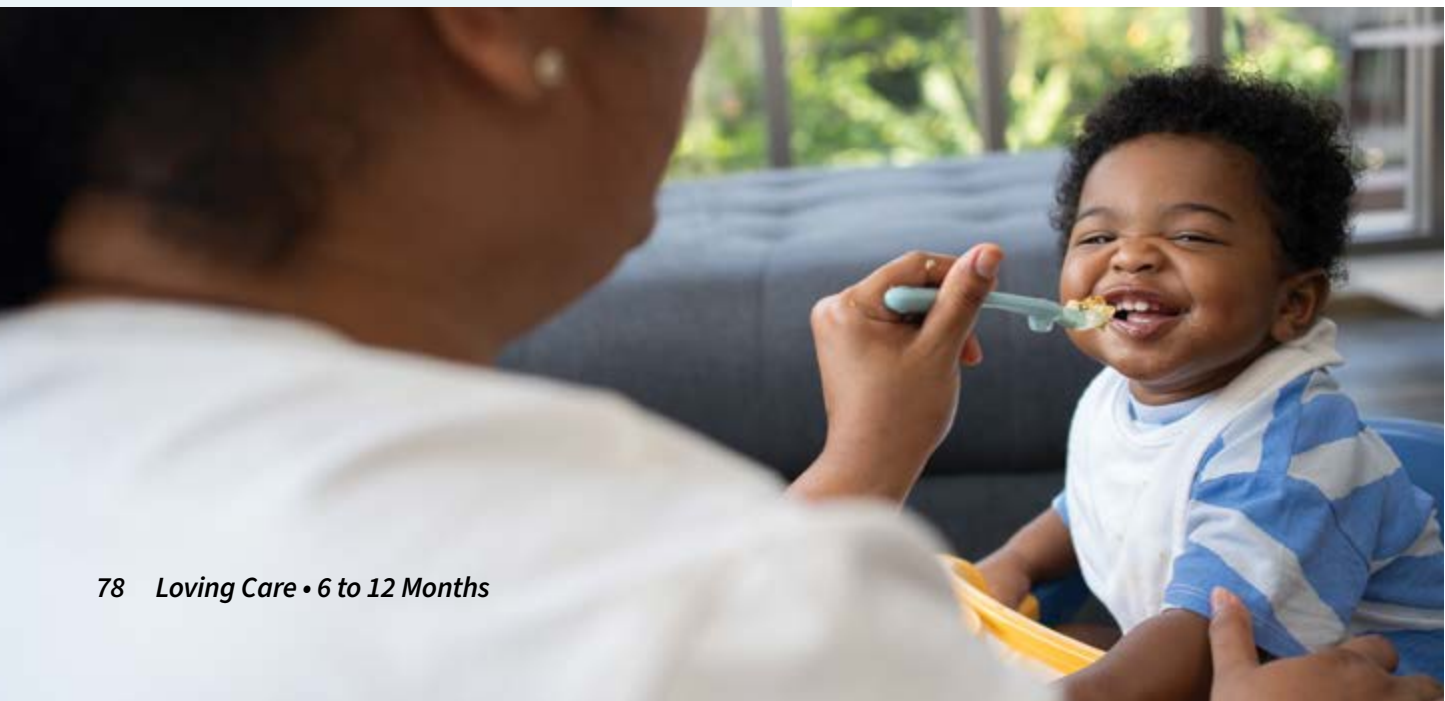
## Did you know?

Your baby may not eat a certain food the first, second, or sometimes third time you offer it to them. This is okay and can be a normal part of the process. Continue offering foods with a variety of textures and flavours to your baby, giving them the chance to learn about and explore many different foods. Sometimes your baby may need to try a food or texture many times before accepting it.

### To feed your baby:

- Sit facing your baby.
- Put a few pieces of soft food they can pick up with their fingers on the high chair tray.
- Put a small amount of food on a spoon and hold it where your baby can see it. Wait for your baby to open their mouth and move toward the spoon, and follow the cues they show you. You can also put a soft finger food on your baby's plate or tray and encourage them to feed themselves with their hands.

Give your baby time to have fun getting used to the new tastes and textures. Over time they might discover that there are foods they like to eat from a spoon and others they'd rather pick up with their fingers. Let them go at their own pace as they learn about food and eating.





Remember to offer your baby foods that they are less likely to choke on. Foods should be soft enough for your baby to mash with their tongue and large enough for them to pick up with one or two hands. Babies who feed themselves do not have a higher risk of choking than babies who are fed purées from a spoon. Babies may gag as they get used to eating different types of food (see **page 99** for more information on gagging and choking).

You might worry about the amount of food your baby eats. Your baby knows their own appetite better than anyone. It's normal for your baby to take a long time to finish a meal as they learn to eat on their own.

## Did you know?

Babies often make faces when trying new foods and new textures. This is normal. They're getting used to something new. It doesn't mean that they don't like the food.

Sometimes your baby may refuse to eat a certain food. Don't worry about it. Just offer the food again in a few days. Keep trying. You may need to offer a new food many, many times before your baby decides to eat it.

## Caution!

If you have questions or concerns, talk to a registered dietitian or healthcare provider for advice on starting solids.

## Double check

It's normal for babies to gag and spit out food while they're learning to eat. It's nothing to worry about. For more information on gagging and choking, see **page 99**.

## How can I tell when my baby is hungry and when they're full?

Even before your baby can talk, they have ways to let you know when they're hungry and when they've had enough to eat.



### Cues that your baby is hungry:

- Turns toward food.
- Opens their mouth when they see the food.
- Gets excited when they see food or when you say things like, “Let’s have lunch.” or “Time for a snack.”



### Cues that your baby has had enough to eat:

- Turns their head away from food.
- Doesn’t open their mouth when food is offered.
- Pushes the spoon or food away.
- Fusses or cries.

### ***Did you know?***

Babies who learn to follow their hunger cues are better able to understand and respond to their hunger and fullness cues later in life.

All babies are different. Your baby may have cues of their own to tell you when they're hungry and when they've had enough. Avoid playing games or offering sweetened foods to coax or trick your baby into eating more. For example, playing games like airplane can be a form of coaxing. You'll find more information on hunger and fullness cues on **page 80** of this book.

## Food textures to offer your baby

**Puréed:**  
smooth, moist,  
lump-free food



Puréed, soft raw or cooked vegetables, and cooked cereals.

\*Strain before eating if there are skin or seeds.

**Mashed:**  
lumpy, minced,  
finely chopped  
or grated food



Mashed, soft, cooked lentils or beans, mashed cooked carrots, well-cooked ground meats, and mashed soft ripe fruits

\*Strain before eating if there are skin or seeds.

**Finger foods:**  
soft foods, bite-sized,  
diced or chopped



Soft, cooked vegetables and ripe fruit such as green beans chopped into bite-sized pieces; finely minced ground or mashed cooked meat, deboned fish and poultry; cooked pasta, grated cheese and bread crusts or toast.

## Food to offer your baby

### **Did you know?**

As you start to offer solid food, keep in mind that your baby is still getting most of their nourishment from breastmilk or formula. Over time, they'll get more nourishment from food and less from breastmilk or formula.

Offering your baby the same foods as your family eats can help them learn to accept and enjoy a variety of textures and flavours at a young age. You can change the texture of the food to meet your baby's changing needs as they grow (see the "Food textures to offer your baby" table on **page 81**).

Offering your baby different textures will help teach them how to chew and move their tongue when eating. It is important to make sure that you are offering foods with lumpy textures by no later than 9 months. If your baby eats only puréed foods for too long, they might have trouble trying other textures later. Watch your baby and follow their cues. You can use a fork, potato masher, food grater, food processor or blender to change the texture of a food. By 12 months of age, your baby will be able to eat most food textures.

Every baby is different and will try new textures at their own pace. Serve foods to your baby in a way that matches their development. Your baby might gag when trying new textures. Gagging is a reflex that happens when food goes to the back of the tongue before they're ready to swallow, and it gets pushed back into the mouth. Gagging is normal and happens as they learn to eat. Gagging is not the same as choking. See the "**Gagging and choking**" section on **page 99** for more information.



## Protein foods

These can be chopped, minced, grated, or cut up. You can purée or mash them in water, breastmilk, or the liquid you cooked them in. If you're formula feeding, you can use formula.

- Red meats (beef, lamb, elk, moose, deer)
- White meats (chicken and turkey)
- Fish: white fish—like haddock, halibut, sole, and cod—salmon, and canned light tuna
- Pork
- Cooked eggs
- Tofu
- Well-cooked legumes such as beans, lentils, and chickpeas
- Plain yogurt
- Cottage cheese
- Shredded cheese
- Milk (Homogenized until age 2)

## Double check

You'll find more information on healthy eating in **Canada's Food Guide** in the "**Resources**" section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



## Did you know?

It is important to offer babies a variety of nutritious, whole foods to allow them to get used to the unique appearances, textures, flavours, and smells of different foods over time. Store-bought baby foods are often smooth purées, and may be a mixture of many different foods. They may not provide the different textures your baby needs to develop their eating skills. They may also be more expensive and higher in sugar and sodium (salt) than foods prepared at home.

While squeezable food pouches can be convenient and mess-free, they only teach your baby to suck up purées. They won't help your baby to learn how to chew or eat foods with lumps. If you do buy squeezable food pouches for your baby, it is a good idea to squeeze the food onto a spoon or offer it alongside a variety of other foods. This way, your baby can practice using utensils and develop eating skills. Plus, you can save any leftover food in the fridge.

If you are buying store-bought baby food, read the list of ingredients on the label so you'll know what you're feeding your baby. For example, store-bought baby food can be very high in added sugar and sodium. You can use the percentage (%) Daily Value (DV) on nutrition facts labels to help you choose products for your baby that are lower in sugar and sodium. A 5% DV or less is a little and a 15% DV or more is a lot. Always check the best before date before you buy or use it.

You'll find more information on how to use food labels to make healthier choices in **Canada's Food Guide** in the "**Resources**" section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

### Whole-grain foods

- Smooth, plain cereals with iron. Prepare cereal according to the directions on the package.
- Whole-grain finger foods—like pieces of bagel, dry toast strips, rice, roti, noodles, cooked pasta, flatbreads, cereal, and unsalted crackers.
- Quinoa

### Vegetables and fruit

Fresh, frozen and low-sodium canned vegetables offer many choices.

- Cook, then mash, purée, chop, mince, grate, or cut up squash, peas, sweet potatoes, green or yellow beans, apples, peaches, pears, apricots, and plums.
- Vegetables should be cooked, but very soft fruits – like bananas – can be served raw.

## Did you know?

If you are planning to feed your baby a vegetarian diet, you need to include a variety of protein foods from **Canada's Food Guide** that work well with your family's vegetarian style. This may include using many plant-based sources of protein such as beans and lentils.

Talk with a registered dietitian about meal planning for your baby so that they get all of the vitamins and minerals they need.

## Did you know?

When choosing foods, think about buying products made here in NS or the Maritimes.

Locally produced, nutritious foods are good for your baby, your family, and your community. Locally produced foods are often fresher. They are better for the environment because they don't travel far to market and they have less packaging.

When you buy locally produced foods, you support local farmers and fishers. More of your money stays in your community.

Consider shopping at your local farmers' market. When you go to the grocery store, ask if locally grown foods are available.

## Caution!

Fish is a great food for babies, but there are a few kinds of fish that Health Canada recommends that you be careful with.

- **Canned albacore tuna** may be high in mercury. Your baby should have no more than 40 g (1.5 ounces) a **week** of this kind of fish. Skipjack tuna (also called chunk light tuna) has the lowest mercury levels and can be offered occasionally.
- **Swordfish, shark, fresh or frozen tuna, marlin, and orange roughy** may also have high mercury levels. Your baby should have no more than 40 g (1.5 ounces) a **month** of this kind of fish.
- **Escolar** contains a kind of oil that humans can't digest. Health Canada recommends that babies, children, pregnant people, and the elderly not eat it. Escolar is also called snake mackerel or oilfish.



## Iron-rich foods

When a baby is born, they have enough iron in their body to last about 6 months. One of the reasons your baby needs to start solid foods at 6 months is that their supply of iron is running low. Foods that are rich in iron should be the first foods that you offer your baby.

Between 6 and 12 months, offer your baby iron-rich foods two or more times a day. Iron-rich foods include:

- Protein foods such as meat (beef, game meats, pork and poultry), eggs, beans, chickpeas and lentils
- Whole-grain foods such as iron-fortified cereals and breads



## Finger foods

The first solid foods you offer your baby will be soft, smooth foods from a spoon.

Along with this smooth food, it's important to also offer your baby foods of different textures that they can pick up on their own. This helps them learn about lumpy foods and to bite and munch on food. It also teaches them to feed themselves and to know that they are in charge of how much they eat.

Start with small, soft pieces of food. As your baby gets better at eating, you can gradually increase the size of the pieces.

### **Safe finger foods include:**

- Pieces of soft-cooked vegetables
- Soft ripe fruit, such as banana
- Finely minced, ground, or mashed cooked meat
- Deboned fish, chicken or turkey
- Grated cheese
- Bread crust or toast

### ***Did you know?***

Learning to handle food with different textures now will help your baby be able to eat more kinds of food as they grow.

This is why it's important to offer lumpy foods early—by 9 months at the latest.



## How much will my baby eat?

Your baby may eat very little solid food at first. Don't be surprised if at first your baby just takes a taste or eats less than a teaspoonful. Don't worry if some of the food ends up rubbed in their hair or squished between their fingers.

They'll gradually eat more as they grow.

As your baby starts eating solid foods, their appetite will change from day to day and from meal to meal. Sometimes they'll be hungry and want to eat more. Other times they'll want less.

### *Did you know?*

**Remember:** Until about 12 months, your baby will still be getting most of their nourishment from breastmilk or formula.

Your baby's interest in eating will depend on:

- **How much fluid they're getting.** If your baby gets more breastmilk than usual, they might be less interested in solid foods at their next meal. If you are formula feeding and your baby gets more formula than usual, they'll also be likely to eat less.
- **How much they're growing.** Babies eat more during growth spurts.
- **How they're feeling.** Babies may eat less when they're tired, sick, or teething.
- **What's going on around them while they're eating.** Your baby may be more interested in the noise from other children, TV, toys, or the phone than they are in eating.
- **How hungry they are.** A baby's appetite can change from meal to meal. For example, some babies like to eat more in the morning and less in the evenings.
- **How well they are able to eat.** Your baby's ability to swallow, chew, and pick up food develops gradually. As their eating skills improve, they'll begin to eat more.

Watch closely! Your baby's cues may not always be easy to see. It's **not** important that your baby eat a certain amount of food at each meal or snack. What matters most is that **your baby decides for themselves** how much they need to eat.

# Learning to drink from a cup

One of the skills your baby learns during this time is how to drink from a cup.

To drink from a cup, your baby has to learn to control the muscles in their mouth. This can take a lot of practice. Learning to drink from a cup is a messy business!

## To help your baby learn to drink from a cup:

- Start with water while your baby is learning.
- Use an unbreakable cup that doesn't tip over easily.
- Expect lots of spills! You can cover your baby with a waterproof bib.
- Help your baby by holding the cup and letting them lean in towards the cup to drink. Encourage your baby to hold the cup with you.

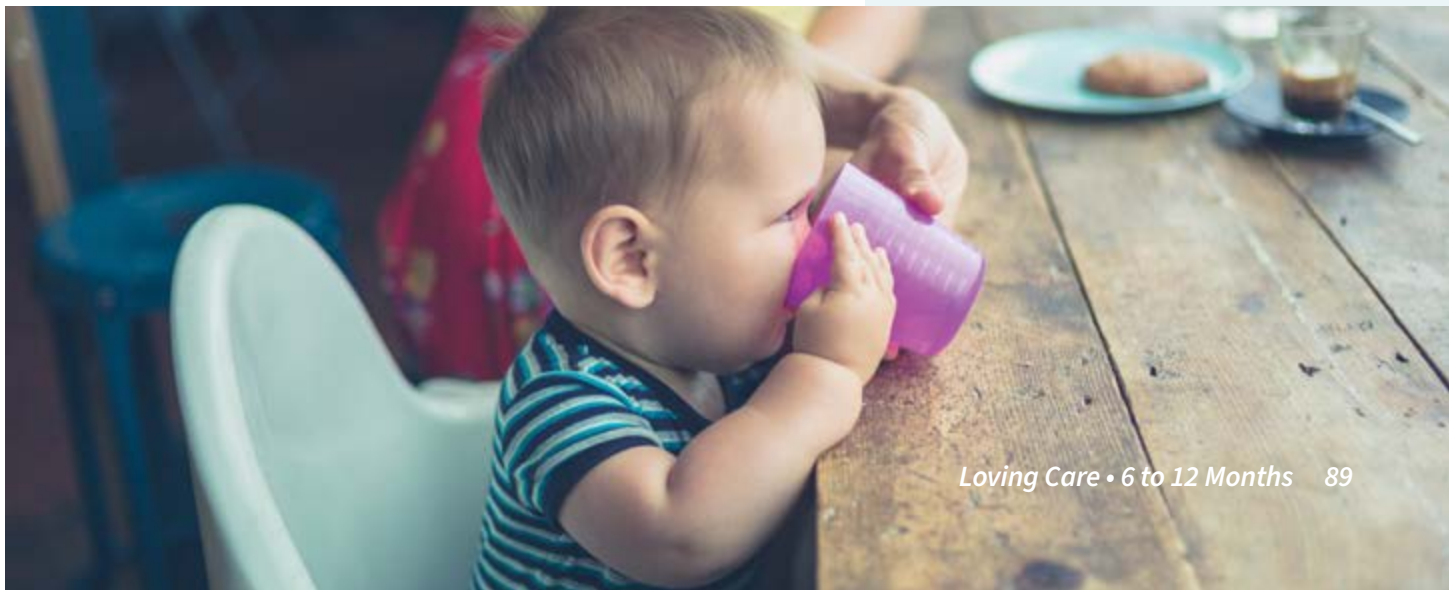
Make sure your baby drinks while sitting at a table. Sit with them. This will help your baby develop a pattern of eating and drinking at regular meal and snack times.

## Did you know?

### Sippy cups

Your baby doesn't need a sippy cup. If your baby uses a sippy cup, it will take longer for them to learn the skills they need to drink from a regular cup. Your baby can learn to drink from a regular cup right from the start.

Don't let your baby carry around a sippy cup. Don't allow them to take it to bed with them. Continually sipping milk or juice can lead to tooth decay. It can also fill your baby up so they won't eat well at mealtimes.



## Drinks for babies

When you give your baby a drink with meals and snacks, use a regular cup, not a sippy cup. You will need to help your baby drink from the cup for a while, but they'll learn to drink on their own after a while.

### Drinks for 6 to 12 months

#### Breastmilk

Continue to breastfeed for 2 years and beyond. You'll find more information about breastfeeding in **Breastfeeding Basics**. If you are feeding your baby with infant formula, you'll find information about formula feeding in **Infant Formula: What You Need to Know**.

#### Water

You can offer water throughout the day, including during snacks and meals. Water will keep your baby hydrated and quench their thirst.

#### Other milk

Between 9 and 12 months, babies can be introduced to whole cow milk or full-fat goat milk with added folic acid and vitamin D. Be sure your baby is eating a variety of iron-rich foods before introducing cow or goat milk. Cow and goat milk needs to be pasteurized.

Before age 2, you may offer your baby whole, 3.25% cow milk or full-fat goat milk. Babies need the fat in milk to help them grow and for brain development.

Skim milk, 1% milk and 2% milk will not give your baby the nourishment they need when used as a **main milk source**.

Plant-based beverages such as soy, oat, almond, rice and coconut beverages do not provide the same kind of nourishment that whole cow or goat milk does. These beverages do not contain enough fat, calories, protein or nutrients to help your child's brain and body to grow and develop. These beverages are not recommended as a **main milk source** for your baby or for children under 2 years of age.

Talk to your health care provider if you plan to offer your baby any milk other than pasteurized whole cow milk or full-fat goat milk as their **main milk source**.

Cow milk and goat milk can be a source of vitamin D. For more information on vitamin D and your baby's needs, see **Breastfeeding Basics**. You can get a copy from your local Public Health office (contact information, **page 148**).

*If you're breastfeeding:* If you want, you can offer small amounts of whole cow milk or full-fat goat milk with meals and snacks after your baby is eating a variety of iron-rich foods. At this age, whole cow milk or full-fat goat milk doesn't replace breastmilk.

*If you're using formula:* Once your baby is eating a variety of iron-rich foods, you can replace formula with whole cow milk or full-fat goat milk. If your baby is not yet eating iron-rich foods regularly, keep using formula. After 12 months, most babies no longer need formula.

## Caution!



Soy milk is not the same as soy-based formula. If you use soy-based formula **do not** switch your baby to soy milk without checking with your health care provider.



## Did you know?

In warmer weather, offer your baby water to drink along with vegetables and fruit that contain a lot of water, such as watermelon, cantaloupe, tomatoes and cucumbers. This will help quench their thirst and provide extra nourishment.

## Did you know?

It is important to think about the quality of the water that your baby and family drink. Make sure your water is safe. You'll find some information on lead in water on **page 142**.

**If you get your water from a well be sure to have it tested before your baby drinks it.** If you are not sure that your water is safe, give your baby bottled water until you get it checked.

For more information on safe well water and to find out how to contact Nova Scotia Environment and Climate Change see **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

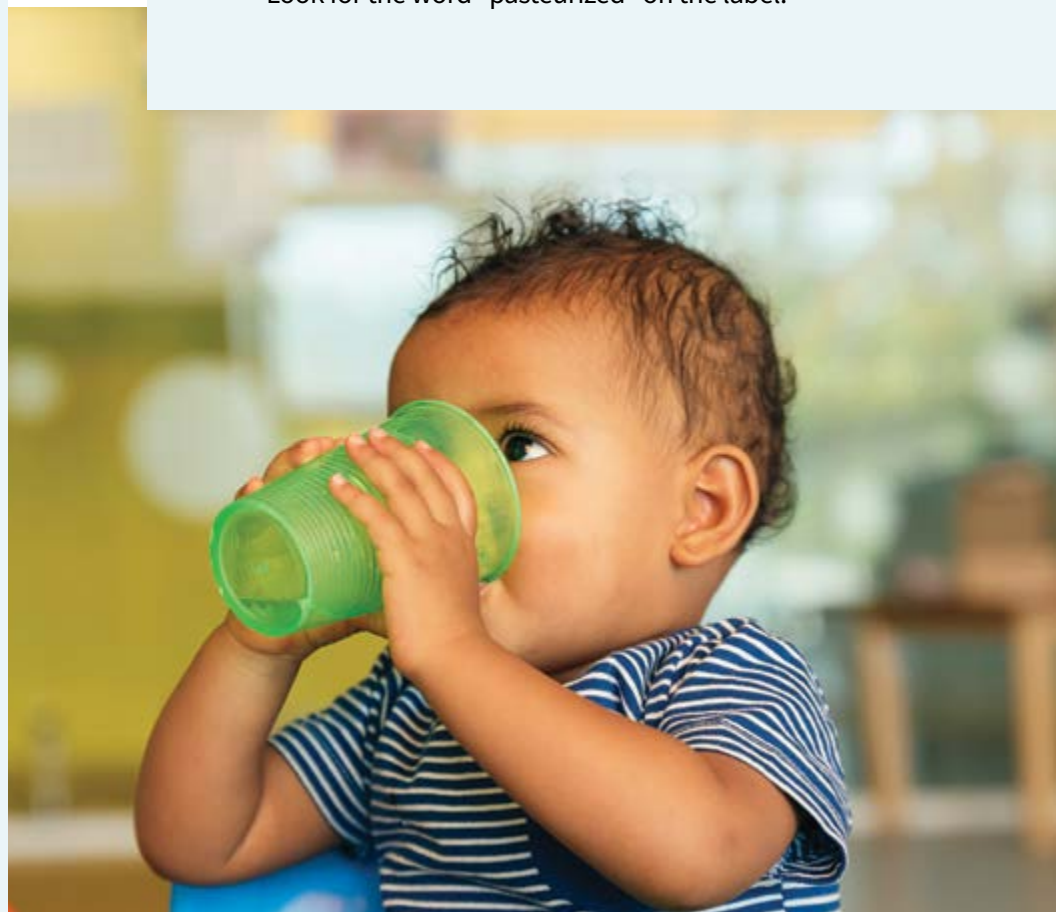
## Juice

- **Canada's Food Guide** recommends water as the best drink for everyone.
- Your baby does not need to drink fruit juice. Juice is high in sugar and has less nutrition than the whole fruit the juice was made from.
- Even 100% juice can lead to tooth decay.
- Drinking too much juice can give your baby diarrhea.

## Did you know?

Be sure that any drink you offer your baby—other than breastmilk, formula, and water—is pasteurized.

Look for the word “pasteurized” on the label.



## Sample menus

Offer your baby solid food 2 or 3 times a day as a meal and 1 or 2 times as a snack.

It helps to plan meals and snacks for about the same time each day. As your baby gets more and more of their nourishment from solid foods, they need to be able to depend on eating at regular times.

Continue to breastfeed or to offer breastmilk with every meal and snack. To help your baby learn to drink from a cup, you can give breastmilk in a cup. You can offer breastmilk before or after solid food. If you want to, between 9 and 12 months you can begin offering whole cow milk or full-fat goat milk.

If you are using formula, offer it to your baby as usual. They'll still be getting most of their nourishment from formula, so they'll need a bottle for a while. To help your baby learn to drink from a cup, you can give formula in a cup. Over time, they'll drink more and more from a cup and by 18 months, you can give all fluids in a cup. You can offer formula before or after solid food. Starting at 9 months, gradually replace formula with whole cow milk or full-fat goat milk.

**The sample menu is only a guide.** Different times and different foods may work better for your baby and family.

Continue to introduce your baby to a wide variety of family foods. Some families use more spices and flavours in their foods than other families. This is sometimes rooted in culture, and other times personal preference. Share the food that you and your family regularly eat with your baby. As long as your baby is getting a well-balanced variety of nutrients, you do not need to make special bland meals for your baby. Your baby has likely already tasted some of the spices and flavours that you use in your family foods through your breastmilk.

### *Did you know?*

Remember: Offer your baby whole cow milk or full-fat goat milk only after your baby is eating a variety of iron-rich foods.



## Sample menu

### Early morning

#### From 6 to 8 months

Breastfeeding (Formula)

#### From 9 to 12 months

Breastfeeding (Formula, gradually replacing formula with whole cow milk or full-fat goat milk.)

### Breakfast

Breastfeeding (Formula)

- Iron-fortified cereal
- Mashed strawberries or other soft fruit

Breastfeeding (Formula, gradually replacing formula with whole cow milk or full-fat goat milk.)

- Iron-fortified cereal
- Chopped strawberries, kiwis or other soft fruit

#### OR

- Iron-fortified cereal
- Applesauce

### Snack

Breastfeeding (Formula)

- Whole-grain toast, cut into small pieces or strips

Breastfeeding (Formula, gradually replacing formula with whole cow milk or full-fat goat milk.)

- Whole-grain and fruit muffin
- Grated cooked carrot

### Lunch

Breastfeeding (Formula)

- Iron-fortified cereal
- Hard-boiled egg, mashed, minced, or grated
- Cooked and mashed sweet potato or other vegetable

Breastfeeding (Formula, gradually replacing formula with whole cow milk or full-fat goat milk.)

- Chicken, chopped
- Steamed brown rice
- Cooked broccoli, chopped

#### OR

- Canned salmon, mashed
- Sweet potato, mashed
- Green peas, cooked soft and mashed

#### OR

- Roast turkey leg, chopped
- Whole-grain bread, cut into strips
- Squash, mashed
- Canned peaches, chopped

## Sample menu

	From 6 to 8 months	From 9 to 12 months
<b>Snack</b>	<p>Breastfeeding (Formula)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unsweetened prunes, puréed</li> </ul>	<p>Breastfeeding (Formula, gradually replacing formula with whole cow milk or full-fat goat milk.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cheddar cheese, shredded</li> <li>• Whole-wheat pita, cut into small strips</li> </ul> <p><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard-boiled egg, chopped</li> <li>• Whole-grain bread, cut into strips</li> </ul> <p><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soft tofu, mashed</li> <li>• Berries</li> <li>• Unsalted crackers</li> </ul>
<b>Dinner</b>	<p>Breastfeeding (Formula)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ground or finely minced plain, dark-meat chicken or other meat</li> <li>• Cooked and mashed broccoli or other vegetable</li> </ul>	<p>Breastfeeding (Formula, gradually replacing formula with whole cow milk or full-fat goat milk.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lean pork roast, chopped</li> <li>• Whole-wheat pasta</li> <li>• Cooked carrots, mashed</li> <li>• Banana and strawberries, chopped</li> </ul> <p><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed dish: ground beef, cooked with diced tomatoes and macaroni</li> <li>• Unsweetened stewed prunes, puréed</li> </ul> <p><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trout or char, deboned and flaked</li> <li>• Steamed brown rice</li> <li>• Cooked green peppers, chopped</li> <li>• Canned peaches, chopped</li> </ul>
<b>Evening and nighttime</b>	<p>Breastfeeding (Formula)</p>	<p>Breastfeeding (Formula, gradually replacing formula with whole cow milk or full-fat goat milk.)</p>

## Caution!

Honey is not safe for babies under 1 year. Do not give your baby honey, or any kind of food made with honey, for the first year. This includes baked and cooked foods that contain honey. Don't put honey on a soother.

Honey can cause infant botulism, a kind of food poisoning that only affects babies. After 12 months, your baby will be developed enough so they can eat honey safely.



## Foods and drinks to avoid

Some foods are not suitable for babies. Many families enjoy these kinds of foods once in a while or on special occasions.

**But your baby is still too young for them.**

There are several reasons not to give these kinds of foods to your baby:

- They won't give them the nourishment they need to grow and develop.
- If your baby gets sweet and salty foods now, they may learn to like them and to prefer them to more nutritious foods. These foods can lead to health and dental problems.

**Do not give your baby...**

**Foods with lots of sugar**

**For example:**

- Candy and chocolate
- Ice cream and frozen desserts
- Sweet desserts
- Cakes, cookies, pastry, granola bars, donuts, store-bought muffins
- Sweetened gelatin
- Pop, freezie/slushie type drinks, fruit-flavoured drinks
- Sugar-coated cereals
- Jams and jellies

## Did you know?

Once your child begins eating solids, it is your responsibility as the parent or caregiver to provide a variety of nutritious foods that are prepared and served in a safe way. It is your child's responsibility to decide how much they want to eat and whether they want to eat at all.

***Do not give your baby...  
Sugary drinks, or drinks with artificial  
sweeteners, caffeine, or alcohol***

**For example:**

- Pop, diet pop
- Fruit juice, fruit drinks, fruit punch, fruit beverages, lemonade, freezie/slushie type drinks, fruit-flavoured drinks
- Sweetened plant-based beverages
- Flavoured waters with added sugars
- Sweetened milks like chocolate milk
- Sports and energy drinks
- Coffee, tea, herbal tea, iced tea, iced coffee, hot chocolate or other specialty drinks
- Alcohol of any kind

***Do not give your baby...  
Foods with lots of salt***

**For example:**

- Pickles and olives
- Processed meats—like hot dogs, bologna, salami
- Ketchup, gravies and sauces
- Chips, nachos, cheese puffs, pretzels, French fries
- Dry or canned soups (Look for soups labeled “low sodium.”)
- Canned pasta



## Did you know?

Your baby needs nutritious fats to grow and develop. These include:

- Fatty fish, like salmon
- Avocado
- Nut or seed butters
- Vegetable oils (olive, canola, peanut, sesame, soybean, flaxseed and sunflower)
- Soft, non-hydrogenated margarine

## Double check

**Canada’s Food Guide** is a good place to find information about healthy eating.

It also contains information about how to read the Nutrition Facts Table on food labels.

You’ll find information in the back of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

Eat a variety of nutritious foods yourself. Let your child see that you enjoy many kinds of food.



## Expect a mess!

Squeezing, splashing, rubbing, and feeling food are part of learning to enjoy eating!

Let your baby explore their food with their hands.

Let your baby feed themselves with their fingers from the first time you offer solid foods. Offer your baby a spoon with food on it. Let them try to take the spoon and feed themselves, or you can hold the spoon near your baby's mouth and let them lean forward to eat the food. Do not put the spoon in their mouth.

Learning to feed themselves is an important part of a baby's development. It builds their muscle skills and their confidence too!

It takes time for babies to develop the muscle control they need to feed themselves neatly. Cleaning up the mess may not be much fun, but it's important for you to be patient while your baby learns these skills.

### ***Did you know?***

If you are concerned about wasting food, offer your baby only a small amount of food at a time. You can always offer more if they want it.



## Gagging and choking

All babies gag and spit out some food when they start eating and exploring new foods and textures. They may also gag when they first try lumpier or thicker foods. Gagging is a normal response that helps protect babies from choking. Gagging doesn't mean that the baby doesn't like the food. As they get better at eating solid food, babies gag less.

Choking is much more serious than gagging. Babies choke when they get food stuck in their windpipe and can't breathe.

Learn what to do if your baby chokes. You can find contact information for first aid classes in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**. Keep emergency phone numbers in your phone.

To prevent choking:

- Be sure your baby is sitting up straight while eating.
- Pay attention to what your baby is able to chew. Be careful that the food you give your baby has a size, shape and texture that lowers their risk of choking. Avoid shapes and hard foods that could make choking more likely.
- Help your baby pay attention while eating. Avoid distractions like TV, toys, and noise from other children during meals.

### Caution!

Someone should always be with your baby while they're eating or drinking.



### Caution!

Don't put cereal or other food in a bottle. This can cause choking and it won't help your baby sleep through the night.

Foods that can cause choking	How to make these foods safer
<p><b>Smooth, sticky foods</b> like peanut butter and nut butters</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Spread them thinly on whole-grain breads or crackers.</li><li>• Don't give blobs or spoonfuls of these foods.</li></ul>
<p><b>Hard foods</b> like some raw vegetables and fruit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cook hard foods to soften them.</li><li>• Grate them into small pieces.</li></ul>
<p><b>Small, round foods</b> like grapes and cherries</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cut each one into 4 small sections.</li><li>• Remove seeds or pits.</li></ul>
<p><b>Tube-shaped foods</b> like cooked baby carrots</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cut them lengthwise into strips.</li><li>• Cut the strips into small pieces.</li></ul>
<p><b>Stringy or rubbery foods</b> like meat, long thin pasta, melted cheese and fresh pineapple</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cut these foods into small pieces.</li></ul>

## Caution!

These foods can cause choking. They are NEVER safe for babies:

- Nuts, seeds, popcorn
- Hard candies, cough drops, gum
- Marshmallows
- Whole grapes
- Carrots cut into rounds
- Hot dogs
- Fish with bones
- Snacks using toothpicks or skewers

## Feed your baby safely

**Sit facing your baby while they're eating. Never leave them to eat alone.** Be there to help as your baby learns to feed themselves.

### ***No hot foods***

Your baby's food can be cold, room temperature, or warm—never hot. If you warm your baby's food, stir it well to make sure there are no hot spots.

### ***Safe seats***

To protect your baby from choking, be sure they're sitting up straight while eating.

The safest place for your baby while eating is sitting up in a high chair. Do up the seat belt to help keep your baby safe.

Never feed your baby or let your baby eat while they are in a moving seat, like a stroller, car seat, or exersaucer.



### ***Food safety***

Food safety is important. Food poisoning can make anyone sick. But it can make babies and small children **very** sick. You can't see, smell or taste the bacteria that cause food poisoning.

One way that your baby could be exposed to the germs that cause food poisoning is if you feed them from a jar or container and then put the leftover food back in the fridge to finish later. This is because the spoon carries germs from your baby's mouth into the food. These germs can then grow in the food and make your baby sick the next time you use the food.

When feeding your baby with a spoon, take the amount of food you'll be using out of the container and put it into a bowl. After your baby is finished eating, throw away any food left in the bowl.

For more information on how to keep things clean, and how to handle, cook and store food carefully, see the “**Families**” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



# Food allergies

A food allergy is the reaction a person's body has when it mistakes a food that was just eaten as being harmful.

Food allergies are not as common as you might think. Few babies have food allergies in their first year of life. Even fewer have food allergies as they get older.

You may have heard that to prevent allergies you should wait until your baby is a certain age to introduce a particular food—like peanut butter. Research has shown that this is not necessary, and delaying the introduction of common food allergens may actually increase the risk of developing a food allergy. Most allergic reactions happen soon after eating, but some may happen within several hours.

If you think your baby might be at a higher risk of developing food allergies, talk to a health care provider for guidance on how to introduce foods safely. Your baby may be at a higher risk if severe food allergies are common in your family or if your baby has eczema.

### **Common signs of a food allergy are:**

- New skin rash
- Hives, swelling, or redness around the mouth or face
- Stuffy or runny nose
- Itchy/watery eyes
- Vomiting (sometimes with diarrhea)

If your baby shows any of these symptoms, talk to a health care provider. These could be signs of a food allergy, but they might be because of other reasons unrelated to food. If a food has caused an allergic reaction, talk to a health care provider before giving this food to your baby again.

## **Caution!**

**If there are any signs of severe allergy symptoms, call 911. You need help quickly.**

Signs of a severe allergic reaction are:

- swelling of the mouth, tongue or throat
- widespread hives (welts) over the body
- difficulty swallowing, hoarse voice or cry
- difficulty breathing, persistent cough or wheezing
- change in skin colour (skin looks pale or blue)
- sudden tiredness/faintness/seeming limp



### ***Introducing common food allergens***

A food allergen is a food, or a substance in a food, that causes an allergic reaction. Introducing common food allergens early and often when starting solids can reduce the risk of food allergies. Start introducing solids to your baby at 6 months old, when your baby shows signs of readiness (see **page 73**). Common allergens should be introduced at the same time as other iron-rich foods.

<b>Common food allergen</b>	<b>How to introduce common allergens at 6 months</b>
<b>Eggs</b>	Fully cook the egg. You can hard-boil it in the shell or scramble it and cook it. Serve it mashed, puréed, or cut into strips. You can also mix the cooked egg with a food that your baby has not had a reaction to before. This is called a well-tolerated food. Add a few teaspoons of breastmilk or water to moisten as needed.
<b>Peanuts</b>	Mix 2 teaspoons of smooth peanut butter with 2–3 teaspoons of hot water. Stir until it’s blended well and dissolved. Let it cool down. You can serve this by itself or mix it with a well-tolerated food.
<b>Milk</b>	Try giving full-fat plain yogurt, grated cheese, or cottage cheese before using milk in cooking or baking. Make sure your baby has tried these foods alone or with a well-tolerated food.  Wait until your baby is between 9 and 12 months old before giving them fluid milk as a drink. Begin with pasteurized whole cow milk or pasteurized full-fat goat milk.
<b>Fish and shellfish</b>	Cook well, purée or mash it, and mix with a well-tolerated food. Make sure fish is deboned.



## Common food allergen

## How to introduce common allergens at 6 months

### Sesame seeds

Serve seeds finely ground and sprinkled into a well-tolerated food or as tahini (prepare similar to peanut butter).

### Soy

For tofu and silken tofu, purée or mash it, and mix with a well-tolerated food.

For edamame, boil it, purée or mash it, and mix with a well-tolerated food.

### Mustard

Mix in with other well-tolerated food.

### Tree nuts

Grind these into a fine powder and sprinkle it into a well-tolerated food.

Or serve nut butter thinned with water and offered on a spoon (prepare similar to peanut butter).

### Wheat

Prepare wheat-based cereal according to the instructions.



**Tips for introducing common food allergens to your baby:**

- **Start with peanut butter or eggs:** Both are good options to begin with. Introducing these foods early seems to be especially helpful for reducing the risk of an allergy to these foods. Change the texture and size of the food pieces based on how your baby tolerates different textures.
- **Start with small amounts:** You can mix common allergen foods into foods your baby already eats. However, before doing this, make sure your baby has tried those other foods on their own without any reactions. If there's no reaction to the allergen, you can gradually offer more over time.
- **Avoid skin testing:** Do not rub food on your baby's skin when introducing allergens. It is recommended that common allergens be spoon-fed instead of having your baby feed themselves. Some foods may cause skin irritation or a contact rash (for example, acidic foods), and these could be mistaken for a food allergy. Applying food to the skin first to test a reaction will not determine how it will be tolerated when eaten.
- **Introduce one allergen at a time:** Offer only one common allergen from the table on **pages 104–105** per day. This approach makes it easier to identify the foods that may cause a reaction. You can still introduce a variety of other new foods but avoid giving more than one common allergen when introducing foods for the first time.
- **Regularly offer common allergen foods:** If your baby has no reaction to a common allergen food, continue offering it regularly to help build tolerance. Try to offer the food a few times a week.

- **Talk to a health care provider:** Talk to a health care provider if your baby has a reaction to one food allergen. It is still recommended to continue introducing other allergens even if your baby has a reaction to one food allergen.
- **Wait and watch for a reaction:** Allergic reactions can happen within a few minutes and up to 2 hours after the food has been eaten. It is best to offer these foods at home or in a comfortable setting where at least one adult can be present to watch for allergy symptoms for at least 2 hours.
- **Offer foods in the morning:** Since allergic reactions usually happen within the first 2 hours after eating, it's best to introduce allergens in the morning, when your baby is most likely to be awake.
- **Introduce allergens when your baby is healthy:** Avoid introducing allergens if your baby has a cold, vomiting, diarrhea or other illness as these symptoms may be mistaken for an allergy.



## Double check

You can find more information about eating well as a family in the “**Families**” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



## Did you know?

Families come in many different shapes and sizes.

When we say “family” we mean people who care about one another. They may or may not live together, but they are important in each other’s lives.

Your family can be you and your baby or can include whoever you want it to.

# Eating together is important

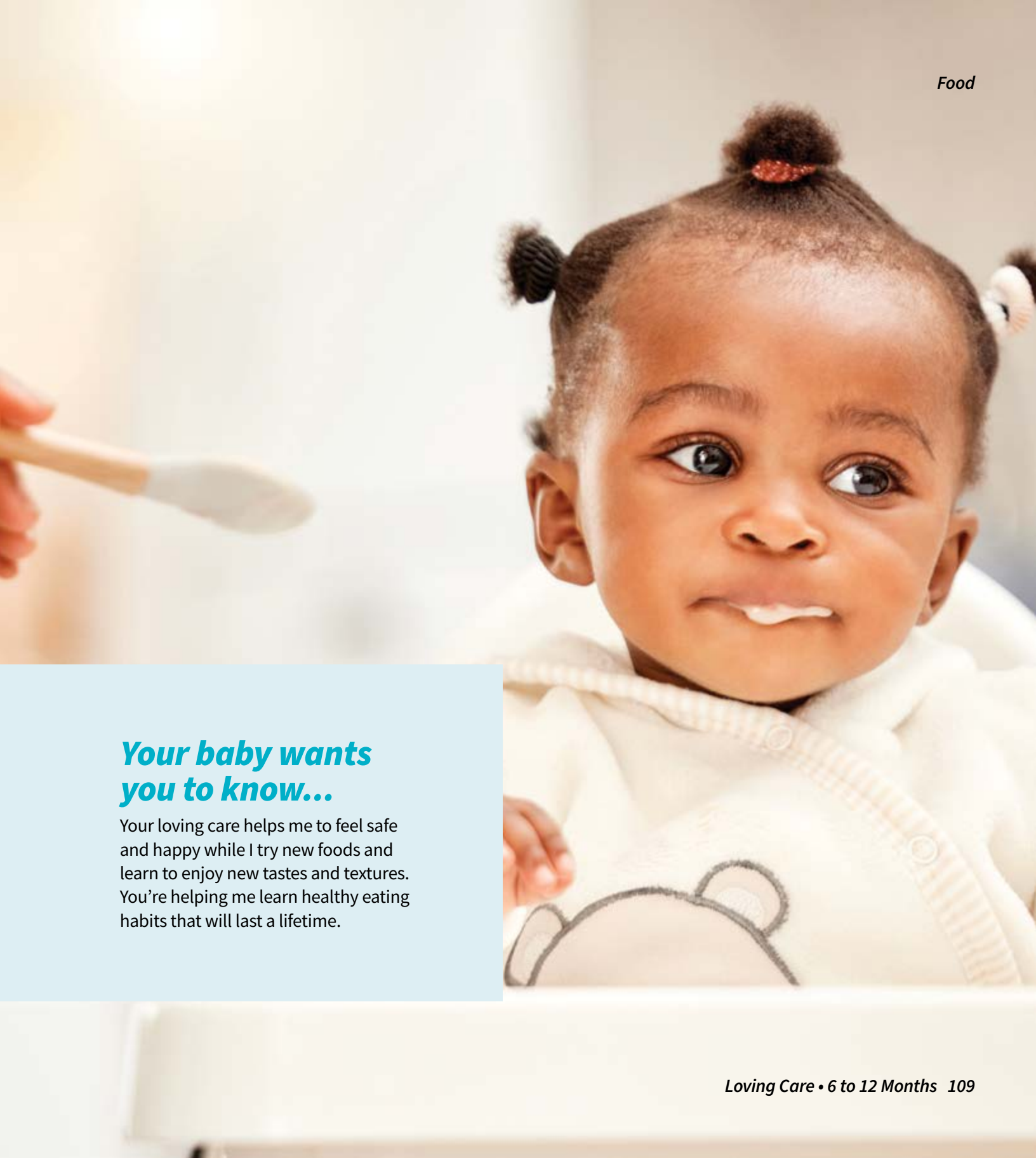
Mealtimes are a time when families can connect with one another. Talking and spending this time together makes the bonds between you stronger.

Even when your baby is small, bring them to the table with everyone else. They’ll learn to enjoy eating and enjoy this time together. As they get older, they’ll be used to eating and talking with everyone.

Try to make mealtime a happy time for everyone. Turn off the TV and put toys away so you all can focus on eating and spending time together.

Eating together as a family when your baby starts eating solid food sets a good example for future eating habits.





***Your baby wants you to know...***

Your loving care helps me to feel safe and happy while I try new foods and learn to enjoy new tastes and textures. You're helping me learn healthy eating habits that will last a lifetime.



## ***Did you know?***

If you speak a different language than your health care provider, ask your health care provider if a language interpreter is available. A language interpreter is trained to help you understand and communicate with health care providers when your language is different from theirs.

## **The YourHealthNS App**



**YourHealthNS** provides safe and quick access to healthcare information, resources and services. You can use it to look for health services near you, find your health records, book vaccines and blood collection appointments, get appointment reminders and more.

Visit [yourhealthns.ca](https://yourhealthns.ca) or download the app.



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# Health

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“My baby is healthy and strong. What can I do to help them stay that way?”

### ***Did you know?***

When guests come into your home, have them wash their hands before they hold your baby. This includes grandparents and other family members.

### ***Did you know?***

Wash your baby’s hands, too. It’s never too soon for your baby to get used to hand washing.

## Hand washing

Washing your hands with soap and water is one of the best and easiest things you can do to keep your baby—and your whole family—healthy. When you don’t have access to water and soap, use hand sanitizer.

### **Everyone should wash their hands:**

- Before eating and before feeding the baby
- Before cooking or preparing food
- Before cleaning your baby’s mouth or teeth
- After changing a diaper
- After using the toilet
- After handling anything dirty
- After petting an animal
- After wiping their nose—or anyone else’s nose—or sneezing or coughing into their hand



# Immunizations

Immunizations protect your baby from serious illnesses. Your baby's vaccines are an important part of keeping them healthy.

Your baby should have had vaccines at 2 and 4 months.

They should get their next vaccines at 6 months. These protect your baby from diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, polio, rotavirus and Haemophilus influenzae type b.

At 12 months or soon after, your baby should get vaccines to protect them from measles, mumps and rubella, chickenpox, meningitis, pneumonia and some ear infections. It's important that your baby not get these vaccines too early. If they get them before their first birthday, they might not work.

If you miss any of these vaccines, contact your health care provider to arrange for your baby to catch up. You can check the **Routine Immunization Schedules for Children, Youth & Adults** on **page 149** to find out what immunizations your baby and other family members need, and when to get them.

**For the most up-to-date version of the schedules, check the Department of Health and Wellness website ([novascotia.ca/dhw/cdpc/documents/Routine-Immunization-Schedules-for-Children-Youth-Adults.pdf](http://novascotia.ca/dhw/cdpc/documents/Routine-Immunization-Schedules-for-Children-Youth-Adults.pdf)) or scan this code:**



If you do not have a health care provider, such as a family doctor, to provide childhood immunizations, contact 811.

## Did you know?

**It's your responsibility to keep a record of your baby's vaccines.** Your child will need this record for child care and school. You can use the yellow **Personal Immunization Record** card. This card also has a chart with all the vaccines your child will need up to age 6. If you don't have one, you can get one from your local Public Health office (contact information, **page 148**).

You can also use VaxRecordNS to track your child's vaccination records **online** at **vaxrecordns.nshealth.ca**.

## Did you know?

Most vaccines are given with a needle. This can be scary and painful for children.

Putting off or stopping your child's vaccines because you don't want them to feel pain can mean they will not get protection from some serious diseases.

For more information on ways to reduce your child's pain during vaccinations, please call your local Public Health office. (contact information, **page 148**).

## Flu vaccine

The flu—also called influenza—is an infection caused by a virus. It affects the nose, throat and lungs, and can cause fever, tiredness, aches and pains. Flu can make your baby very sick, very quickly.

Flu vaccine is a safe and effective way to reduce the risk that your baby will get this illness. If your baby does get the flu, it will be much less serious if they've had flu vaccine.

When your baby gets flu vaccine for the first time, they'll need 2 doses. These are given at least 4 weeks apart.

In Nova Scotia, flu vaccine is **free of charge**. Getting the flu vaccine yourself will help protect your baby. It's also a good idea for anyone who lives with or cares for your baby to get the flu vaccine.

The best time to get the flu vaccine is between mid-October and December. Flu vaccine protects for only 6 months, so you need to be vaccinated every year.

You can get the flu vaccine from:

- Your health care provider
- Public Health
- Community clinics



### **Did you know?**

Remember to take your baby's yellow **Personal Immunization Record** card when you go for flu vaccine, or visit **vaxrecords.nshealth.ca** to track your child's vaccination records **online**.

### **Did you know?**

You can find out more about flu and the flu vaccine from your health care provider or local Public Health office (contact information, **page 148**).

# Questions that your health care provider may ask

When your baby is sick, your health care provider will ask questions about your baby's illness when you call or visit. Before you talk to the health care provider, think about what's wrong and why you think your baby is sick. This will help you to explain your concerns clearly.

The health care provider will ask about how your baby is feeling and what they've been doing:

- Fever? How high? How long have they had it?
- Chills or shaking?
- Throwing up? How often? What does it look like?
- Diarrhea? How often? How much? What does it look like?
- Cough or runny nose? Are they having trouble breathing?
- Not feeding? Have they lost weight?
- Hard, dry poop? When was their last poop?
- Do they have a rash?
- Is your baby acting differently than usual? Are they very sleepy or fussy?
- Have you given your baby any medicine?
- Has your baby been around someone who's recently been sick?

Write down your baby's symptoms as you notice them. If you can, write down the time you noticed them. Write down anything you think you might forget to tell the health care provider.

When you visit or talk to the health care provider, make sure you understand everything they tell you to do. If you're not sure, ask them to explain.

## *Did you know?*

Nova Scotia has a Family Pharmacare Program to help with the cost of prescription drugs.

Some families are also eligible for a pharmacare program for low-income children. (Contact information for both programs is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families.**)

## *Did you know?*

If you do not have a doctor or health care provider, check the Nova Scotia Health website for the "**Need a Family Practice Registry**". (Contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families.**)

## *Did you know?*

All of us are entitled to health care that responds to our individual needs and allows us to feel safe and respected.

Talk to your health care provider about what you want and need for yourself and your baby. You have a right to health care that respects your race, culture, religion, sexual orientation, identity and ability.

## When to see a health care provider

Trust your instincts. You know your baby best. If you are concerned about any change in your baby—either physical or in the way they behave—see your health care provider or call 811. Don't worry about taking your baby to your health care provider too often.

Talk with a health care provider if your baby has any of these symptoms:

- Fever over 38.5°C (101.3°F)
- A hard time breathing
- Sleepy all the time. You have a hard time waking them up.
- Fewer wet diapers than usual or dark yellow, smelly pee
- Cries a lot more than usual or sounds different when crying
- No interest in eating or drinking
- Keeps rubbing or pulling on their ear
- Poop is different from usual—it could be very runny or liquid, or very hard and dry
- A cough that lasts for several days
- Diaper rash that is red and peeling or has sores in it
- Not alert or smiling at you
- Not interested in playing



### Double check

You'll find information on some things to do when looking for medical care in the “**Welcome**” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



### Did you know?

Use a plastic digital thermometer when you take your baby's temperature.

Place the tip of the thermometer in the centre of your child's armpit. Keep the thermometer in place by gently pressing your baby's elbow against their side.

Wait 2 minutes or until you hear the beep. Check the temperature.

# Common concerns

## Giving medicine

Check with your health care provider or pharmacist **before** you give your child any kind of medicine. This includes over-the-counter medicines like acetaminophen.

When giving your baby medicine, be careful to keep track of the amount you give. It's easy to give too much. To be safe:

- Only one person should give the medicine.
- Write down when you give the medicine.
- Write down how much you give.

If you are worried that your child has had too much medicine, contact your health care provider or the Atlantic Canada Poison Centre (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).

## Dehydration

Dehydration means the loss of body fluids. It can happen very quickly when a baby has diarrhea or is vomiting.

### Some signs of dehydration are:

- Not peeing—less than 4 wet diapers in a day or more than 8 hours without peeing
- Drowsiness
- Weakness
- Dry mouth and lips
- Thirstiness
- No tears when crying
- Sunken eyes

**Dehydration is serious.** See a health care provider right away if you think your baby is dehydrated.

## Did you know?

If your baby is breastfeeding, they still need a vitamin D supplement. For more information see **Breastfeeding Basics**.

You can get a copy from your local Public Health office (contact information, **page 148**).



## Caution!

It's **NEVER** safe to give your baby cough syrup.



## Double check

You'll find information on some things to do when looking for medical care in the “**Welcome**” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

## Dental health

Oral health is essential to overall health at every age and stage of life. For children, good oral health supports growth and development, behaviour and their ability to learn, socialize and play.

Tooth decay is one of the most common, yet preventable, childhood diseases. Tooth decay happens when sugar in food and drinks is broken down by bacteria in the mouth. This makes acid that hurts the tooth enamel (the outer layer of the tooth). Pain and infection from tooth decay can make it hard for your baby to sleep, talk and grow.



### **Caution!**

Keep toothpaste out of children's reach.

### **Did you know?**

In addition to regular visits, it is important to talk to a health care provider or oral health provider if:

- Your baby has white or brown spots on their front teeth.
- Your baby injures a tooth.
- Your tap water does not have enough fluoride to prevent tooth decay. This could be the case if you're using well water or municipal water that doesn't have added fluoride.
- Your baby has visible plaque on their teeth. Plaque looks like white or yellow deposits on the teeth.
- Your baby was premature.
- You or other caregivers have tooth decay.
- You have any other concerns about your baby's oral health.

## Supporting good oral health starts early

Baby teeth are worth taking care of! Healthy baby teeth are important for your baby's overall health. Baby teeth also help to shape your child's face and guide adult teeth into place.

Here are three steps to help prevent tooth decay:

### 1 Keep your baby's teeth and mouth clean.

- **Make cleaning your baby's mouth and teeth fun!** Sing a song. Make up stories about cleaning away the bacteria that can cause tooth decay.
- **The Canadian Dental Association recommends brushing twice a day** with a child-sized toothbrush and water for children under the age of 3 years old.
- **Children under the age of 3 who are at risk of developing tooth decay may benefit from using a small amount of fluoride toothpaste** (the size of a grain of rice) when brushing. You use this tiny amount because small children tend to swallow toothpaste while brushing. You should consult a dentist or other oral health professional to determine if your child is at risk of developing tooth decay.
- **Brush your baby's teeth every morning and every evening before bed.** Always wash your hands before checking your baby's mouth. When you brush, sit or lay your baby in a safe position. You need to support your baby's head so you can see their teeth clearly. Your hands should be clean and free to open their mouth and do the brushing.
- **Lift the lip to check your baby's teeth for cavities.** Look at the front and back teeth. If you notice brown or white spots on your baby's teeth, call an oral health professional, such as a dentist or dental hygienist, right away. This may be the first sign of decay.



### Double check



Some foods may stick to teeth or may be hard to remove when brushing, such as dried fruits and fruit gummies, bars and leathers. This can contribute to tooth decay.

## Did you know?

### What causes cavities?

Sugar in food and drinks plus plaque in the mouth can lead to tooth decay.

Plaque is a thin, hard-to-see layer of bacteria that covers the teeth and gums. These bacteria use the sugars in food and drink to make acid. This acid eats away the hard outer layer of the teeth—called enamel—and causes tooth decay.

The longer food and sugary drinks stay on the teeth, the greater the risk of tooth decay.

Bacteria that cause cavities can pass from your mouth to your baby. To protect your baby, take care of your own dental health.

You will set a good example for your baby and there will be fewer cavity-causing bacteria in your mouth to pass along.

## 2

### Help protect your child's teeth and gums. Offer your child a variety of nutritious foods and drinks.

Offering a variety of nutritious foods is important for healthy teeth. For more information about food, see the “**Food to offer your baby**” section on **page 82**.

When food and drinks are left on your baby's teeth too long, they can contribute to tooth decay. Consider the following when offering your baby food and drinks:

- Offer your baby milk or water at mealtimes. Offer water in between meals or when they are thirsty.
- Drinks other than water should be finished in one sitting instead of sipping them throughout the day. Each time children sip on juice (even 100% juice), milk, or formula, their teeth come in contact with the sugars that are in the drinks. This can contribute to tooth decay.
- Avoid propping up a bottle or a sippy cup as this can cause early childhood tooth decay.
- Putting children to bed with a bottle or sippy cup with anything other than water is not recommended. Liquids that come in contact with the teeth stay on them overnight.
- Brushing at bedtime helps to remove the sugars in foods and drinks from children's teeth. After brushing teeth, you can offer water to drink if your baby is thirsty.

### 3 See an oral health professional, such as a dentist or dental hygienist, regularly.

Take your baby for their first dental check-up within 6 months of their first tooth's appearance or by their first birthday, whichever comes first. The oral health professional will check your child's risk for cavities and answer your questions. A regular dental exam will help catch small problems early.

If you do not have a dentist or oral health professional, you can ask a family member or friend for suggestions. Or you can check the Provincial Dental Board of Nova Scotia website for "Find a Dentist in Nova Scotia" (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).

#### *Dental coverage*

MSI covers basic dental care for children, starting from birth up until the end of the month of their 15<sup>th</sup> birthday.

For children covered by a co-pay dental plan, MSI will pay the portion that you would normally pay for these basic dental services and treatments.

You'll find contact information for the MSI Children's Oral Health Program in **Loving Care: Parents and Families** or you can talk to your oral health professional.



### **Caution!**

Not every teething product is safe. Teething products, like teething necklaces and amber necklaces, that can tie around a baby's neck can cause serious injury or death and should not be used. They can put your baby at risk of strangulation and can be a choking hazard.



### **Caution!**

**Check with your oral health professional, health care provider, or pharmacist if you think your baby might need medicine for teething pain.** Ask which kind to use and how much is best for your baby.

## Teething

Teething is a natural process during which your baby's teeth push through the gums.

Most babies' first teeth start to come in at around 6 months. Some start teething a little earlier, some a little later. Most babies get the two middle teeth on the top and the two middle teeth on the bottom first. But all babies are different and some may get teeth in a different order.

Teething can make your baby restless and fussy. To help them feel better:

- **Give your baby a clean, cold facecloth to suck or chew.**
- **Give your baby a teething ring.** Teething rings should be cold but not frozen. Wash them often. Use warm, soapy water and rinse well before giving them to your baby.
- **Massage your baby's gums using a clean finger.**
- **Don't use teething biscuits.** Teething biscuits are high in sugar and may cause cavities.
- **Don't use teething gels.** They can affect your baby's health or cause choking by making the throat numb.

Fever or diarrhea is **not** a normal part of teething. If your baby has a fever or diarrhea for more than 24 hours, call your health care provider. If your baby continues to be restless or fussy, check with your oral health professional or health care provider.

## Thumb sucking and soothers (pacifiers)

Thumb sucking and using soothers are not likely to cause problems as long as your child stops by the time their permanent teeth start to come in at about age 5.

### If you give your baby a soother:

- Don't dip a soother in anything, especially honey.
- Make sure it can't come apart.
- Keep it clean. Use warm soapy water and rinse it well before giving it to your baby.
- Get a new one when it becomes sticky or has cracks or tears.
- Don't put a soother on a string around baby's neck. Strings can choke.
- Don't pin soothers to clothes. Pins can hurt or be swallowed.

If you are concerned about thumb sucking or soothers, talk to your oral health professional or health care provider, or contact your local Public Health office (contact information, **page 148**).

## Caution!

**It's not safe to put honey on a soother.**



Honey can cause infant botulism, a kind of food poisoning that only affects babies. Honey is also a kind of sugar. Putting any kind of sugar on a soother can cause serious tooth decay.



## A smoke-free home and car

One of the best things you can do for your baby's health is to give them a smoke-free home and car.

**There is no level of tobacco smoke that is safe for your baby.** Tobacco smoke hurts children in several ways.

- **Second-hand smoke** is smoke that children breathe in. It's smoke that you can see in the air. Second-hand smoke is even more dangerous for babies than for adults. Babies have smaller lungs and they breathe more quickly. This means they breathe in more smoke.
- **Third-hand smoke** is smoke that babies pick up through their skin and mouths. The poisons in tobacco smoke stick to everything they touch—for example, toys, clothes, sheets, towels, carpets, furniture, and dishes. Babies are exposed to third-hand smoke just by living in a house where people smoke. They crawl on floors, climb on furniture, play with—or chew on—toys, and touch clothes, sheets, and towels that are all covered with third-hand smoke. These poisons stay around for a long time. When someone smokes in a house or car, the third-hand smoke they leave behind can affect children months later.

### Double check

You'll find more information on stopping smoking in the “**Parents**” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

You can also contact Tobacco Free Nova Scotia. (Contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).





There is a link between children who live with tobacco smoke and several serious illnesses.

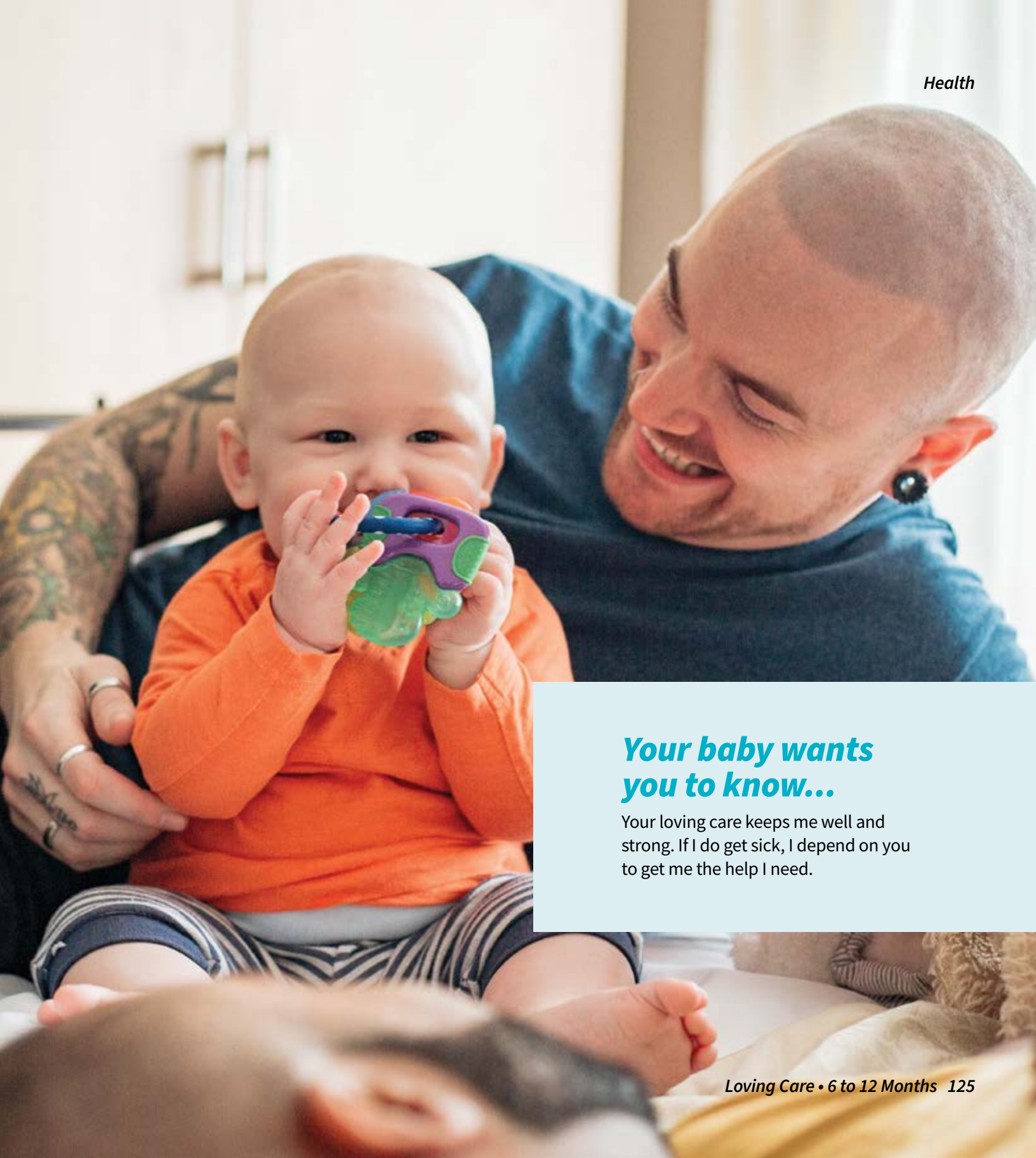
These include:

- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Childhood cancer
- Leukemia
- Brain cancer
- Ear and lung infections
- Asthma

**In Nova Scotia, it is illegal to smoke in a car with children present.** Second- and third-hand smoke in cars is even more dangerous than smoke indoors. The smoke in a car builds up quickly, even with the window down. Smoking in the small space inside a car is 23 times more toxic than smoking in a home. Even if you only smoke in your car when your child isn't present, they will be exposed to the third-hand smoke on the car seats and upholstery.

Your baby can't control the amount of second- and third-hand smoke they're exposed to. Only you can do that. Air exchangers and open windows will not protect your baby. The only way to protect your baby is to make sure no one smokes in your home or your car.

Ask others who care about your baby not to smoke in their home when your baby is there. Remind them that it's illegal to smoke in their car when a child is present.



## ***Your baby wants you to know...***

Your loving care keeps me well and strong. If I do get sick, I depend on you to get me the help I need.

## ***Double check***



For information on emergency preparedness, visit Nova Scotia Health's Parenting Supports web page and the Government of Nova Scotia Emergency Preparedness web page. Websites are only available when you have power, so be sure to check out this information in advance of storms so you can prepare.





# Safety

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# Safety at home

“My baby is growing fast! They’re moving around more every day. What can I do to keep them safe while they explore?”

## Did you know?

You can find information about recalls of baby toys and furniture from Consumer Product Safety. (Contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families.**)

You can find more information about the safety and safe use of baby furniture and products at Child Safety Link. (Contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families.**)

## Baby furniture

Whether you are buying new or second-hand baby furniture or borrowing furniture from friends or family, whatever you use should be clean, sturdy, and meet safety standards.

Buy cribs, cradles, playpens and strollers that meet current Canadian safety regulations.

Buy safe baby furniture and equipment. Use it safely. Follow the directions that come with it. Always use any safety straps that come with the product.

## Caution!

Second-hand baby furniture is not always safe. Do not use or buy second-hand baby furniture unless:

- The manufacturer’s name, the model number, and the date when it was made are marked on the product.
- The product comes with directions for putting it together and using it safely.

Before you buy or use second-hand furniture, check with Consumer Product Safety (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families.**)



## Strollers

### Buying safe strollers

- **Made after 1985.** They should have a label that says who made it, when it was made, and gives a model number.
- **The right size** for baby's age and weight.
- **Sturdy safety belt** that is solidly attached to the frame.
- **Good brakes** and well-attached wheels.

### Using strollers safely

- **Never leave your child alone in a stroller.**
- **Always use the safety belts.** Be sure your baby stays seated in the stroller.
- **Use the brakes whenever the stroller is stopped.** Use them when putting your baby into, or taking them out of, the stroller.
- **Don't pad the stroller with pillows or blankets.** These can cause suffocation.
- **Don't use the stroller on an escalator.**
- **Check the stroller often** to be sure it's in good repair.



## Cribs

### Buying safe cribs

- **Meets Canadian safety regulations.** As of 2016, drop-side cribs cannot be sold, imported, or advertised because they are unsafe. Do not use drop-side cribs as they are not safe and have been linked to injuries and deaths.
- **Made after 1986.** The crib should have a label that says who made it, when it was made, and give a model number.
- **Sturdy.** It should be built with screws and bolts. Nothing should rattle or come loose when you shake it.
- **Firm, well-fitting mattress.** You should not be able to fit more than 2 fingers between the mattress and the side of the crib. The mattress should be no more than 15 cm (6 in.) thick.
- **Easy to put together.** The crib should come with clear, easy-to-understand directions.

## Caution!

A co-sleeper is a type of crib that attaches to the side of an adult bed. Co-sleepers are not recommended as they can cause suffocation. Babies can become trapped between the edge of the mattress and the side of the co-sleeper.



## Caution!

Cradles are only safe until your baby can roll over or is 6 months old.

### Using cribs safely

- **Place the crib away from windows.** Be sure there are no blind cords, curtains, or electrical cords within reach.
- **Move the mattress to its lowest level as soon as your baby can sit up.**
- **Bumper pads can cause suffocation.** Keep pillows, stuffed animals, and heavy blankets out of the crib.
- **Don't harness or tie your baby in a crib.**
- **Don't put your baby in the crib with a soother on a cord or string.**

## Bassinets

### Buying bassinets

- **Sturdy base.** If the bassinet has wheels, they should lock in place.
- **Right size for your baby.** Many bassinets are not safe if your baby weighs more than 6.8 kg (15 pounds), is older than 4 months, or can roll over.
- **Should not rock from side to side.**

### Using bassinets

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully. Call the manufacturer if you have questions or have lost the instructions.



## Sleep sacks

Using a sleep sack is a safer choice than swaddling your baby in a blanket, however the safest way for your baby to sleep is in just one layer of clothing, such as a sleeper.

If you do use a sleep sack, keep your baby as safe as possible by making sure the sleep sack:

- Is snug around your baby's upper body, but not tight around their chest
- Is loose around their hips
- Has no snaps, buttons, or other choking hazards
- Meets Health Canada's children's sleepwear flammability guidelines. (Contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families.**)

## Baby slings

Many parents find slings to be a cozy way to carry their baby. However, when not used correctly, slings can cause suffocation.

A baby can suffocate in a sling for two reasons:

- Their face is pressed against your chest or the sling.
- They're curled up in a position where their chin is on their chest.

### Every time you use a sling:

- Check to be sure that it is in good shape—no rips, tears, or damaged hardware.
- Keep the baby's head above the edge of the sling.
- Make sure their face is not pressing into your body.

**When you use a sling, make sure that you can always see your baby's face.**



## Caution!

Baby slings are especially risky for babies under 4 months because they can't hold up their necks well and are at a higher risk of suffocating.

## Toys

Toys that are safe for older children are not always safe for babies. Check your baby's toys often. Throw away broken or damaged toys. Check the toy package for safety information. Read and follow all directions. Throw away all plastic, cellophane, or styrofoam package materials.

### Safe baby toys:

- Are right for your baby's age
- Have no sharp points or edges
- Have no small parts that could break or pull off
- Are bigger than your baby's fist—too big to swallow or choke on

## Caution!



Babies love to chew. Anything a baby can hold will go right into their mouth.

Be sure anything your baby plays with is clean and safe to chew on.

## Did you know?

First aid for children can be different from what you would do for an adult. Many parents take a first aid course to learn what to do if their child is hurt.

St. John Ambulance and the Red Cross both offer first aid courses. Check to see what's offered near you (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).



## Babyproof early

Being alert to all the new skills your baby is learning is the best way to keep them safe. Your baby is interested in everything they see. They need to explore their world and their new skills help them to do it.

Your baby can move faster and reach higher than you might think. Now is the time to babyproof your home and think about preventing injuries as your baby begins to grow into an active toddler.

Babyproofing means making your home a clean and safe place for your baby to explore.

The best place to start babyproofing is on your hands and knees. Pretend to be a baby and crawl around your home. Look at everything from your baby's point of view.

In this section you'll find a checklist to help you find and fix the things in your home that could hurt your baby. Check every room in your home for dangers. And check often. You need to keep one step ahead of your baby's developing skills.

Your baby depends on you to make their world safe.

### Double check

You'll find information about sun safety, avoiding insect bites, and pet safety in the “**Families**” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



### Double check

You'll find more information about your baby's growth and development on **pages 16–29** in this book.

### Caution!

Your baby is always safest when someone is watching them. It only takes a second for a baby to get hurt.



Keep a close watch on your baby when visiting other people's homes. Their homes may not be babyproof.

## Babyproofing checklist

In Canada, more children die or go to the hospital because of injuries than for any other reason.

**Nine out of 10 injuries in the home can be prevented.**

Babyproofing your home, keeping a close watch on your baby, and using the right car seat can prevent many injuries.

**Check every room in your home. Check often.**



## Falling

**LOOK FOR:** Things that could cause a fall

- Put gates at the top and bottom of stairs.** Make sure that the gates at the top of the stairs are screwed into the wall. Never use a pressure gate at the top of the stairs.
- Clean up spills and puddles quickly.** Babies can slip and fall.
- Be sure your high chair, wagon, swing, and stroller have safety straps.** Fasten the safety strap whenever your baby uses them. Never leave your baby alone in a high chair, wagon, swing, or stroller.
- Use a non-slip mat in the bathtub.** Use a non-slip mat on the bathroom floor.
- Make sure that there is nothing near windows or balcony rails that your baby could climb on**—for example, no furniture or flowerpots.
- Keep stairs and high-traffic areas in your home free from clutter and tripping hazards.** This is especially important for parents who must use stairs while carrying their baby.
- Put window guards on windows above the ground floor.** Or fix the windows so they can't open more than 10 cm (4 in.). Screens in windows are not enough to keep your baby safe.
- Look for sharp edges on furniture.** Tape foam over the edges or remove the furniture from the room.
- Keep large toys and stuffed animals out of cribs and playpens.** Your baby could climb up on them and fall out.
- Put the crib mattress at its lowest level** so your baby can't climb or fall out.
- Keep drawers closed** so your baby can't climb them.



### Caution!

Never use a baby walker with wheels. Babies have fallen down stairs and suffered serious head injuries in these walkers.

They are so dangerous that they can't be sold in stores in Canada anymore.

If you have one, throw it away. If you see one, don't buy it.

## Pulling down

**LOOK FOR:** Things your baby could pull down on themselves



**Check for dangling cords on lamps and appliances.** If your baby can reach the cord, they can pull down a lamp, teakettle, hair dryer, or toaster. Tape cords to the wall or keep them out of reach.



**Make sure TVs, TV stands, bookcases, and other heavy furniture are attached to something** so your baby can't pull them over onto themselves. For example, some bookcases can be bolted to the wall.



**Remove tablecloths and placemats.**

## Baby furniture

**LOOK FOR:** Baby furniture that could hurt your baby



**Be sure all baby furniture is clean, sturdy, and meets safety standards.** Cribs, playpens, and strollers should meet current Canadian safety regulations. They should have a label that says who made it and when it was made. The label should also give a model number.



Cribs must be made after 1986.



Strollers must be made after 1985.



Playpens must be made after 1976.

## Suffocating

**LOOK FOR:** Things that could suffocate your baby



**Use a toy box without a lid.** If your toy box has a lid that you can't remove, make sure it has large air holes so that if your baby gets trapped inside, they can still breathe.



**Keep plastic bags out of reach.** Tie a knot in the middle of the bag so your baby can't put it over their head.

## Burning or scalding

**LOOK FOR:** Things that could burn or scald your baby

- Make sure the water from your taps is not hotter than 49° C (120° F).** You can put a scald protector on the bathtub faucet. This shuts off the water if it becomes too hot. You can find out how to adjust your water temperature by contacting Parachute Canada (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).
- Cooked or heated food for baby can be cold, room temperature, or warm—not hot.** If you warm your baby’s food, stir it well to be sure there are no hot spots.
- Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove when cooking.** Use the back burners whenever you can.
- Be sure that there is a working smoke detector on every floor of your home.**
- Cover all electrical outlets with plastic outlet covers that fit tightly and are very difficult to remove.**
- Keep your baby away from all heat sources.** This includes: wood stoves, fireplaces, space heaters, and radiators.
- Keep your baby in a safe place where you can see them while you are busy in the kitchen—for example in a high chair or playpen.** Keep hot foods and liquids out of reach.
- Don’t carry hot liquids while you’re holding your baby.** Use a travel mug with a tight lid for hot drinks even when you’re at home.

### Double check

You’ll find information about fire safety in the “**Families**” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

### Caution!

Your baby’s skin is thin and very sensitive. It burns very quickly and easily.

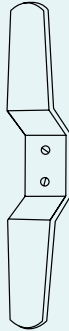
Babies under 1 year should not be in direct sunlight. You’ll find information on fire safety, sun safety and preventing sunburn in the “**Families**” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

## Choking

**LOOK FOR:** Things that could choke your baby



**Keep cords from curtains and blinds up high, out of your baby's reach.** Attach a cleat to the wall and wrap the cord round it. Or use a clip clothespin, or twist tie to wrap them up out of reach. If your cord has a loop at the bottom, cut it open and knot the ends of the two cords. Be sure there are no cords within reach of your baby's crib.



**Keep latex balloons out of reach.** Balloons and pieces of popped balloons can choke your baby. Don't let your baby put balloons or balloon pieces in their mouth.



**Store older children's toys where your baby can't get at them.** Teach your other children to keep small toys away from the baby.



**Make sure there are no long strings, belts or ties on your baby's clothing.** For example, remove strings from hoods. Soothers should not be attached to your baby's clothes with long strings or cords.



**Remove all mobiles and hanging toys from the crib** as soon as your baby can sit up.



**Check all toys for small pieces that might come off.** Check for broken toys and remove them.



**Store all small objects out of your baby's reach.** This includes things like coins, buttons, small batteries, keys, and earrings. Store purses and backpacks out of reach. There are lots of things in a purse or backpack that your baby could choke on. Remember: anything your baby can pick up will go in their mouth.



### Caution!

When your baby starts to eat solid food, make sure that it is mashed, grated, or chopped so there are no pieces big enough for them to choke on.

Don't give your baby blobs or spoonfuls of thick, sticky foods—like peanut butter. Babies should never have nuts, popcorn, hard candy, or gum.

You'll find information on feeding your baby on **pages 72-109**.

## Poisoning

**LOOK FOR:** Things that could poison your baby

**Keep dangerous products out of sight and up high.** Put childproof latches or locks on any cupboard your child could reach. Store purses and backpacks out of reach. Things that can poison your baby include:

- Drugs—medicine, vitamins, legal and illegal drugs of any kind
- Alcohol—beer, wine, any kind of alcohol
- Baby oil
- Cigarettes and cigarette butts
- Cosmetics and personal care products—like perfume, shampoo, aftershave, and nail polish remover
- Cleaning products
- Bug or weed killer
- Paint and paint thinner
- Gasoline and antifreeze
- Button batteries

**Keep plants out of your baby's reach.** Some are poisonous. You can find more information about poisonous plants by contacting the Atlantic Canada Poison Centre (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).

**Keep anything that could poison your child in its original container.** This way you will always know what it is and won't confuse it with another product.

### Did you know?

Keep the number of the Atlantic Canada Poison Centre in your cell phone: 1-800-565-8161 (Toll free).

**In an emergency, call 911.**



### Caution!

Put products away **immediately** after every use. Never leave medication or harmful products out, not even for a few minutes



### Caution!

Cannabis, including edibles, is a poisoning risk for children. Edibles often look like candy, and if a child eats them, they can get very sick. You can find more information on storing cannabis safely at Child Safety Link. (Contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).

## Toys

**LOOK FOR:** Toys that could hurt your baby

- Check your baby's toys to be sure they are safe for their age.**
- Check toys often to be sure there are no loose or broken parts.**
- Make sure your baby's toys are too big to swallow or choke on.** Anything that can fit through a toilet paper roll is too small for your baby to play with.
- Be sure that toys have no strings or cords that are long enough to wrap around your baby's neck.**
- Be sure that toys are not so loud that they could damage your baby's hearing.** If a toy is loud enough that you have to raise your voice above the noise, it's too loud for your baby.
- If a toy has batteries, be sure that the battery covers are screwed in** so that your baby can't get at the batteries.

### **Did you know?**

Noisy toys can hurt your baby's hearing.

To avoid damage to your baby's hearing:

- Reduce the amount of time they spend playing with noisy toys.
- Keep a close eye on your baby while they play with noisy toys.
- Cover the speaker with tape to block some of the sound.
- Don't put batteries in the toy.
- If there are volume controls, turn them to low.

Your baby doesn't need noisy toys. There are lots of other things they'll enjoy, like books, blocks, and puzzles.

### **Did you know?**

You can find information about toys that have been recalled from Consumer Product Safety or from Family Resource Centres. (Contact information for both is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families.**)

# Lead poisoning

## ***Lead-based paint***

Lead-based paint is a serious health hazard. Lead poisoning can cause anemia. It can also damage the brain and nervous system, resulting in learning disabilities.

Lead-based paint is especially dangerous:

- When it is chipping or flaking
- When it is in a place that babies can reach or chew on

If your home was built before 1960 it is likely that it has lead-based paint.

If your home was built after 1980, paints used indoors would be lead free, but there may be lead in the paint used on the outside.

If your home was built after 1992, both indoor and outdoor paints will be lead free.

If you think there is lead-based paint in your home, contact the Atlantic Canada Poison Centre for advice on what to do (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).

For more information on lead-based paints, contact Health Canada (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).

## ***Lead in toys***

Canada has laws that regulate the amount of lead in children's toys. You can check with Consumer Product Safety to find out about any toys that have been recalled because of high levels of lead (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**). Family Resource Centres also often have information about product recalls (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).



### ***Lead in water***

Whether you get your water from a well or a municipal water supply, if there is lead in your pipes, pumps, or plumbing, Health Canada recommends that you let your cold water tap run for about 5 minutes every morning—or just flush your toilet. This will flush out lead and copper that could build up in the water overnight.

Hot water will draw out more lead and other minerals that may be in your plumbing. Always use cold tap water for drinking, cooking, filling your kettle, and mixing formula.

Some municipalities in Nova Scotia keep track of which houses get their water through lead pipes. You can call your municipal water supply to see if they know whether your pipes are lead.



## Car safety

Car seats save lives. When you use the right car seat in the right way, you can lower the risk that your child will be hurt or killed in a crash by 70%.

In Nova Scotia, it is the law that your baby must be in a car seat whenever they are in a car or truck. Protect your child by using a car seat on every ride, including when travelling with grandparents, caregivers or in taxis.

A rear-facing seat provides the best protection for your child's head, neck and spine in a sudden stop or crash.

Once your baby is too heavy or too tall for the infant seat, use a larger rear-facing seat.

A rear-facing car seat is safest for your baby. Keep your baby in a rear-facing seat until they reach the seat's height or weight limits.

You'll find information on how to choose and install car seats in **Keep Kids Safe: A Caregiver's Guide to Car Seats**. You'll find a copy in the "Resources" section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



### Caution!

**Buy your baby's car seat in Canada.**

Car seats purchased outside of Canada—or on-line from non-Canadian sources—do not meet Canada's safety standards.

Look for this safety mark.



### Caution!

Never leave your baby alone in a car, not even for a few minutes.

## Did you know?

Babies love bath toys! To prevent mould and mildew, dry the toys and store them in a mesh bag or open container.

## Caution!

Be sure any electrical items—like hair dryers—are kept unplugged and away from the tub. They can cause electric shock if they fall into water while plugged in.

## Caution!

Don't use a baby bath seat or bath ring in the tub.

Health Canada warns parents that baby bath seats can cause drowning.



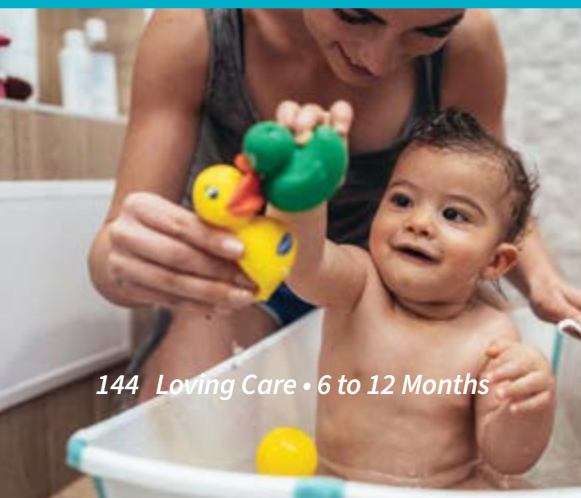
# Bath safety

When your baby can sit up straight by themselves, they're old enough to move to the regular bathtub.

### To keep your baby safe while bathing:

- **Never leave your baby alone in the tub, even for a second.** Babies can drown very quickly in very little water. Don't turn your back—pay close attention while your baby is in the tub. Be sure you have everything you need before you put your baby in the tub. If you have to answer the phone or the door, wrap your baby in a towel and take them with you. Don't leave your baby alone with another child.
- **Use a non-slip mat in the tub.**
- **Put a padded cover on the faucet.** Face your baby away from the faucets so they're less likely to reach for them.
- **Run the water before you put the baby in the tub.** Make sure it's the right temperature—lukewarm, not hot or cold.
- **Run about 5 to 8 cm (2 to 3 inches) of water.**
- **Test the water temperature with your elbow before you put the baby in the tub.** The water should be cooler than you would use for your own bath.
- **Drain the tub as soon as bath time is over.**

Babies often enjoy playing in water. This is a good time for your baby to learn about splashing, pouring, squirting, and squeezing. Bath time can be fun for you both!



## ***Your baby wants you to know...***

I need to move so I can learn and grow. I depend on your loving care and attention to keep me safe while I explore my world—indoors and out.





# Resources

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## Public Health

You'll find contact information for all the resources and supports referred to in this book in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

- Amherst..... 1-800-767-3319 or 902-667-3319
- Antigonish.....902-867-4500 ext. 4800
- Baddeck.....902-295-2178
- Barrington Passage.....902-742-7141
- Berwick.....902-542-6310
- Bridgewater.....902-543-0850
- Cheticamp.....902-224-2410
- Digby.....902-742-7141
- Elmsdale.....902-883-3500
- Glace Bay.....902-842-4050
- Guysborough.....902-533-3502
- Halifax Regional Municipality, West Hants and Eastern Shore.....902-481-5800
- Inverness.....902-258-1920
- Liverpool.....902-543-0850
- Lunenburg.....902-543-0850
- Meteghan Centre.....902-742-7141
- Middleton.....902-542-6310
- Neil's Harbour.....902-336-2295
- New Glasgow.....902-752-5151
- New Waterford.....902-862-2204
- North Sydney.....902-794-2009
- Port Hawkesbury.....902-625-1693
- Shelburne.....902-742-7141
- Sydney.....902-563-2400
- Truro.....902-893-5820
- Wolfville.....902-542-6310
- Yarmouth.....902-742-7141





# Routine Immunization Schedules for Children, Youth & Adults

The vaccines listed on these schedules are given free of charge.

Children, youth and adults with high-risk conditions may require additional doses and be eligible for additional/different vaccines. For more information, talk to your health care provider or call your [Public Health office](#).

Childhood Immunizations	Schedule						
	Birth	2 months	4 months	6 months	12 months	18 months	4-7 yrs
<b>RSV</b> Respiratory syncytial virus monoclonal antibody	✓ <sup>1</sup>						
<b>Influenza</b>				✓ <sup>2</sup>			
<b>DTaP-IPV-Hib</b> Diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis (whooping cough), polio, and Haemophilus influenzae type b vaccine		✓	✓	✓		✓	
<b>RV</b> Rotavirus		✓	✓	✓			
<b>Pneumo Conj.</b> Pneumococcal 15-valent conjugate vaccine		✓	✓		✓		
<b>Men C Conj.</b> Meningococcal group C conjugate vaccine					✓		
<b>MMRV</b> Measles, mumps, rubella and varicella vaccine					✓	✓	
<b>Tdap-IPV</b> Tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis (whooping cough), and polio vaccine							✓

<sup>1</sup>RSV is offered to all babies younger than 8 months born during or entering their first RSV season.  
<sup>2</sup>Every flu season for all children 6 months of age and older. Children under 9 years old getting their first flu vaccine need 2 doses.

School Immunizations	Grade 7	
<b>HPV</b> Human papillomavirus vaccine	✓	
<b>Hepatitis B</b> Hepatitis B vaccine (2 doses)	✓	✓
<b>Tdap</b> Tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine	✓	
<b>Meningococcal Quadrivalent</b> Meningococcal Quadrivalent vaccine (Groups A, C, W, and Y)	✓	

Adult Immunizations	Schedule			
	Pregnant People	All Adults	Adults 65 & older	Adults 75 & older
<b>Influenza</b> Every influenza season	✓	✓		
<b>Enhanced Influenza</b> Every influenza season			✓	
<b>Tdap</b> Tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis vaccine (One dose in adulthood, 10 years after previous receipt of tetanus containing vaccine.)	✓	✓		
<b>Td</b> Tetanus, diphtheria vaccine (Every 10 years)		✓		
<b>Pneumococcal Conj.</b> Pneumococcal 20-valent conjugate vaccine			✓	
<b>Shingles</b> Shingles vaccine (2 doses)			✓	
<b>RSV</b> Respiratory syncytial virus vaccine				✓
<b>MMR</b> Measles, mumps and rubella vaccine (2 doses for those born in 1970 or later) See the <a href="#">NS Vaccine Publicly Funded Eligibility Policy</a> for additional eligibility		✓		

<sup>1</sup>Regardless of trimester, influenza vaccine should be offered with every pregnancy during the flu season.  
<sup>2</sup>Regardless of age and previous vaccination status, Tdap should be offered with every pregnancy.  
 You may be eligible for COVID-19 vaccine. Talk to your healthcare provider or visit [www.nshhealth.ca/coronavirusvaccine](http://www.nshhealth.ca/coronavirusvaccine) to learn more.

For the most up-to-date version of the schedules, check the Department of Health and Wellness website ([novascotia.ca/dhw/cdpc/documents/Routine-Immunization-Schedules-for-Children-Youth-Adults.pdf](http://novascotia.ca/dhw/cdpc/documents/Routine-Immunization-Schedules-for-Children-Youth-Adults.pdf)) or scan this code:



# Health appointments for your child covered by MSI

## Dental

MSI covers basic dental care for children from birth up to the end of the month of their 15<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Once a year, the MSI Children's Oral Health Program covers:

- One dental recall exam
- One fluoride treatment
- Two routine x-rays
- Fillings, necessary extractions and nutritional counselling. Additional fluoride treatments are sometimes covered, as determined by your dentist.
- Scaling (1 unit for children 10 and younger; 2 units for children 11 to 14)

- One other preventive service— includes, but may not be limited to, brushing and flossing instruction, and/or cleaning.

Check with your dental office about current services covered by MSI, as coverage options may change, or check the Department of Health and Wellness website for the Children's Oral Health Program.

As well, MSI covers sealant application on permanent molars. In some cases, MSI also covers a second fluoride treatment. Check with your dental office to see if your child qualifies for a second fluoride treatment paid for by MSI.

## Vision

### Routine Vision Exam

The Canadian Association of Optometrists recommends children receive their first eye exams between 6 and 9 months old. MSI covers a routine comprehensive eye examination **once in a 2-year period** for children who have not yet reached their 10th birthday. You can take your child to any optometrist in the province for this appointment.

A comprehensive eye exam looks at all aspects of a child's vision function, including how well the eyes focus up close, how the eyes work together and the overall health of the eyes. Even if your child has 20/20 vision, they still need to have an eye exam.

## Hearing and Speech- Language Pathologists

**Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia** is a provincially funded resource for testing and treating hearing, language, and speech-related issues in Nova Scotians of all ages. The audiologists and speech-language pathologists can help with any hearing, language, and speech-related challenges you or your child may have, from prevention to diagnosis to treatment.

These services are free with a valid Nova Scotia Health Card (MSI). You can refer yourself or your child. You do not need a referral from a doctor or other professional.

Most newborns in Nova Scotia have their hearing tested before leaving the hospital. If your baby did not have their hearing tested as a newborn, contact Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia to make an appointment as soon as possible. Even if your newborn had their hearing tested, consider getting their hearing tested again if you have any concerns or questions. You may also want to have your child's hearing tested if they have:

- a close family history of hearing loss
- frequent middle ear fluid and/or ear infections
- certain illnesses that may cause hearing loss, such as meningitis
- certain medical conditions, or if they take certain medications that can cause hearing damage
- facial or skull differences, such as cleft lip and palate

Speech and language skills develop over time. Every child will develop at their own rate. For more information on what to expect from your child at different ages, visit [hearingandspeech.ca](http://hearingandspeech.ca). If you have **any** concerns about your child's communication skills, contact **Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia** by calling the toll-free number **1-888-780-3330** or by email at **[info@nshsc.nshealth.ca](mailto:info@nshsc.nshealth.ca)**





Thanks

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### *Parent Health Education Resource Working Group (2008-2011)*

- **Jennifer Macdonald**, (Co-chair), Provincial Health Educator, Department of Health and Wellness
- **Rose Couch**, (Co-chair), Early Childhood Coordinator, Department of Health and Wellness
- **Bonnie Anderson**, Public Health Nutritionist, Capital Health
- **Kim Arcon**, Community Home Visitor, Southwest Nova, Annapolis Valley, and South Shore District Health Authorities
- **Sue Arsenault**, Public Health Nurse, Pictou County Health Authority
- **Audrey Caldwell**, Public Health Nurse, Capital Health
- **Alice de la Durantaye**, Community Outreach Worker, Southwest Nova District Health Authority
- **Susan DeWolf**, Family Support Worker, Extra Support for Parents Volunteer Service, IWK Health Centre
- **Sherry MacDonald**, Public Health Nurse, Guysborough Antigonish Strait & Cape Breton District Health Authorities
- **Sarah Melanson**, Early Childhood Consultant, Public Health, Capital Health
- **Annette Ryan**, Perinatal Nurse Consultant, Reproductive Care Program of Nova Scotia
- **Tina Swinamer**, Coordinator, Early Childhood Nutrition, Department of Health and Wellness
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- Kathy Penny, Public Health Nurse, Capital Health
- Trudy Reid, Public Health Nutritionist, Cumberland Health Authority

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- Geneviève Flynn, Resource Specialist, Department of Health and Wellness
- Michelle Newman, Resource Specialist, Department of Health and Wellness
- Breana Rubin, Early Years Program Specialist, Nova Scotia Health
- Haileigh Robb, Early Years Consultant, Nova Scotia Health
- Danielle Duncan, Early Years Program Specialist, Nova Scotia Health

### Ad hoc Nutrition Working Group

- Tina Swinamer, Coordinator, Early Childhood Nutrition, Department of Health and Wellness
- Mary Daly, Public Health Nutritionist, Cape Breton District Health Authority
- Brenda Leenders, Public Health Nutritionist, Colchester East Hants District Health Authority
- Bonnie Anderson, Public Health Nutritionist, Capital Health
- Joanne Llewellyn, Public Health Nutritionist, Annapolis Valley District Health Authority

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- Beverley Madill, Community Health Nurse, Potlotek Health Centre, Chapel Island
- Sarah Mavrak, Health Promotion Specialist, Child Safety Link, IWK Health Centre
- Kim McGill, Immunization Coordinator, Department of Health and Wellness
- Heather McKay, Health Promotion Specialist, Child Safety Link, IWK Health Centre
- Cornelia Melville, Registered Child Psychologist, South West Nova District Health Authority
- Patricia Millar, Volunteer La Leche League Canada Leader, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
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# Loving Care

6 to 12  
Months  
2026



All four Loving Care books can be downloaded at:  
[nshealth.ca/parenting-supports](https://nshealth.ca/parenting-supports)

Loving Care is given free of charge to all new  
parents in Nova Scotia.