

You and your premature baby: **6 months**



Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota

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NICU Follow-Up Clinic

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What to expect this month

Your baby's personality is blossoming. She is developing ideas about who she is, who cares about her, and who is a stranger.

Her bonds with her parents and loved ones are deepening. You may now notice some "separation protest" when mom or dad leaves her sight. At the same time, she may become wary or fearful of strangers. This behavior shows that the brain's memory center is maturing: your child remembers who is familiar and who is not.

Caring for your baby

Sitting skills

Preemies need extra practice to sit steadily enough to use their hands for play. Try propping your baby with pillows or blankets for security. If unsteady, your baby may use only one hand, rather than both, to reach for toys or hold them.

Personality and memory

By now, your baby has developed a unique emotional tone or temperament. You may have noticed patterns, and maybe can predict how your baby will react to new faces or changes in routine. He now has a keener memory and expects events to be repeated: feedings, diaper changes, and naptimes.

Your baby is also beginning to connect cause and effect, and is learning he can make things happen. Now is a good time to offer toys that react. For example, a bell rings when your baby pulls a string. At first your baby may accidentally make the toy work, but soon, he will learn to link between the action (pulling the string) and the result (the bells rings).

New teeth

Many babies have begun to cut their bottom teeth. Teething does hurt, and often it will cause fussiness. Help soothe your baby's gums by offering a teether to chew.

This month with baby

Here's what 6-month-old babies might tell you . . . if they could!

Moving

I like to:

- suck my toes.
- roll from my back to my stomach.
- sit up alone for several minutes.
- creep or scoot on my tummy.
- reach with one arm.

I enjoy it when you:

- put bells on my booties, so I can play with my feet.
- let me go barefoot.
- place me on the floor on my stomach.
- get down on the floor on your hands and knees and play with me.

Playing

I like to:

- smile at myself in the mirror.
- look for you when you say my name.
- have time to warm up to new people.

I enjoy it when you:

- rock me and sing to me.
- play peekaboo, pat-a-cake, and other talking and laughing games.

Thinking

I like to:

- make things happen, like pulling a string to ring a bell.
- look at familiar things in new ways.
- study small details like beads that move.
- explore the ideas of “inside” and “under.”

I enjoy it when you:

- give me toys and react when I do something.
- give me objects to push or kick, like a beach ball or an empty box.

Communicating

I like to:

- babble and say syllables.
- hear different people's voices.
- belly laugh. I may laugh when you play with me.

I enjoy it when you:

- copy the sounds that I make.
- have “conversations” with me, and answer me when I make my sounds.
- respond to my sounds when I call you or need you.