In this letter you’ll find helpful resources and learn about:

- Flu vaccine.
- Immunizations your baby may need.
- Feeding your baby solid foods.
- How to clean your baby’s teeth.
- How moving helps your baby grow.
- The importance of early relationships.
- Regular bedtime routines to help your baby sleep.
- Baby-proofing your house.
- The dangers of baby walkers.

Happy reading!

Well-Child Visits

Six-month checkup time!
It is important to check your baby’s growth and development often because he or she is changing so fast. Write down any questions you have so you can ask them at your baby’s six-month checkup.

Immunizations

Protect your baby this flu season
This will be the first flu season your baby can get a flu vaccine. Your baby should receive a flu vaccine every flu season from now on. He or she will need two doses spread at least one month apart for the best protection. The vaccine protects your baby throughout flu season. Infants and young children who get the flu are more likely to develop complications and be hospitalized. For the best protection make sure everyone who has contact with your baby is also vaccinated against the flu.

Immunizations at six months
Babies need vaccines because the diseases they can prevent often strike at an early age. An infant who gets a disease that could have been prevented by a vaccine may have serious health problems that can last a lifetime. For the earliest and best protection, your baby needs to complete each vaccine series on time.

Your baby may be due for the following recommended vaccines at the six-month checkup:

- Rotavirus (RV)
- Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (DTaP)
- Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib)
- Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV)
- Hepatitis B (HepB)
- Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV)
- Flu (influenza)

Some babies may need additional vaccines if they have certain medical conditions. Talk to your baby’s doctor or nurse if you have questions. Keep your baby’s Lifetime Immunization Record in a safe place and bring it to every visit. You will need this record for child care and school. To view your family’s immunization records online, go to wa.myir.net.

Nutrition and Physical Activity

Tips for starting solid foods
The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding for at least one year. Breastmilk gives your baby great nourishment, disease protection, comfort, and security. Breastmilk or formula will be your baby’s main form of nutrition for the first year.

You’ll know your baby is ready for solid food when he or she can sit up with minimal support, control head movement, and swallow food from a spoon. This may happen between four and six months old. Offer your baby a wide variety of healthy foods. Strained pureed meats or single-grain cereals, such as rice, oatmeal, or barley, with breastmilk or formula. Offer your baby a small amount of solid food—one to four tablespoons once a day. Gradually increase to two to three times a day. Babies will let you know when they’ve had enough to eat. They may close their mouths tightly, turn their heads away, spit out food, or shake their heads.

Give your baby one new food at a time and wait three to five days before starting another food. If your baby vomits or has a rash or diarrhea, this may be from the new food. Stop giving him or her that food and call your baby’s doctor or nurse. If there isn’t a reaction, continue that food and introduce other new foods.

Start by giving your baby food that you and your family regularly eat. Next, try foods, such as avocado, banana, cooked sweet potato, squash, or peas. Be sure to peel and mash foods until smooth. Don’t offer hard foods. Serve at room temperature or slightly warmed, but not too hot! If you’re concerned about allergies ask your baby’s doctor or nurse. Wait until your baby is at least 12 months old before offering honey or foods made with honey because of the risk of botulism. For more information, see the brochure about feeding your baby from 6 to 12 months in this mailing.

Oral Health

New teeth coming in
Between 6 and 12 months, your baby may show signs of new teeth. Your baby may have red, tender gums and may not eat or sleep well. Here are some tips to soothe sore gums:

- Offer a cold (not frozen) teething ring to chew on.
- Offer a clean, cold, damp washcloth to chew on.
- Rub your baby’s gums with a clean finger.

Do not use teething gels. Use of teething gels can lead to a serious condition where the oxygen level in your baby’s blood becomes very low. If nothing in the list above helps, ask your baby’s doctor or dentist for advice.

Clean your baby’s teeth and gums at least twice a day and before bed. Use a moist cloth or a small, soft toothbrush. Add a rice-size amount of fluoride toothpaste once teeth appear. Avoid sharing toothbrushes and eating utensils with your baby. You and your older children can pass cavity-causing germs through saliva to your baby. Have your baby’s teeth checked by a dentist or doctor by 12 months of age.

Growth and Development

Early relationships matter
The relationships your baby forms with you and other caregivers will affect the rest of his or her life. Your baby needs adults who want to have close, caring relationships with him or her and who can meet your baby’s physical needs. Remember, your baby:

- Has feelings and needs to feel loved, wanted, and special.
- Needs caregivers to respond quickly when crying.
- Learns by playing and interacting with adults.

Each baby develops at his or her own pace. If you have questions or concerns about his or her development, talk with your baby’s doctor or nurse. Or, call the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588. They will connect you with a specialist in your area to help you with your concerns and to find local services to check your baby’s progress.

Let me try small pieces of soft or mashed food.
Encourage your baby to move
Crawling, rolling, and wiggling across the floor builds your baby’s brain and muscles. Give your baby plenty of supervised tummy time and play with him or her on the floor. Put toys just out of reach so your baby can try to move toward them. Your baby may take longer to crawl or move on his or her own if your baby spends a lot of time in play seats, playpens, car seats, strollers, or swings.

Help your baby fall asleep
A regular bedtime routine may help your baby settle down more easily. For example, give your baby a bath, change his or her diaper, play quietly, or read a book. Cuddle your baby and put him or her in the crib before he or she gets too tired. Your baby may like to suck a pacifier for comfort. Other liquids (even formula and breastmilk) may cause cavities if left in your baby’s mouth while sleeping. To help prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), everyone who cares for your baby should put him or her to sleep on his or her back at nap and bedtimes.

Safety

Baby walkers are dangerous
Walkers are never safe to use, even with an adult close by. Most walker injuries happen while adults are watching. It’s hard for you or your baby’s other caregivers to move quickly enough to prevent injuries. A child in a walker can move more than three feet in one second! Instead of a walker, try a stationary activity center without wheels and place it away from stairs, hot appliances, and window cords.

Baby-proofing tips
Baby-proofing your house can reduce the chance of injury, but you or an adult you trust should always be close by watching your baby. Make sure other caregivers baby-proof their homes, too. The image below can help you:

1. Place breakable things out of reach.
2. Anchor furniture and TVs to the wall to prevent tipping.
3. Put latches on drawers and cupboard doors.
4. Keep cords out of reach or taped to the wall.
5. Keep smoke and carbon monoxide detectors monthly.
7. Keep baby away from hot food and surfaces when cooking.
8. Cover outlets.

Referrals
- Online Immunization records: wa.myir.net
- Child development resources: Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588 (711 TTY relay) or parenthelp123.org/child-development

Thanks for reading! Share this letter with other caregivers in your child’s life. You’ll hear from us again before your baby is nine months old with information on:
- Tips to keep your baby healthy.
- Eating together as a family.
- Switching from a bottle to a cup.
- Your baby’s development.
- Antibiotic use.
- Safety in the bath tub and in cars.
- How to prevent falls.

For the Health of All Our Children
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@WatchMeGrowWA  www.watchmegrowwa.org

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