



Government of Western Australia  
Child and Adolescent Health Service  
WA Country Health Service

# child development 6-9 months



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**Y**ou and your baby are starting to feel (and act) like separate people.

He is starting to sit up, move by rolling, reach out, and do his own thing.

He worries that you might not come back when you go away, and lets you know it.

Give him lots of safe things to look at, touch and play with.

Playing on his tummy on the floor will make his back strong and help him learn to crawl.

You'll notice some big emotional and physical changes between 6 and 9 months. Your baby is able to move around and take a much more active part in family life.

## Social and emotional development

Your baby is beginning to realise she is a separate person surrounded by her own skin, and finishing at her hands and feet.

- She has begun to feel she has an outside and an inside, and that they are different. She's starting to understand that you are separate from her, and will worry when she can't see or feel you nearby.

- She begins to recognise and identify her own feelings and that they vary. For instance, she may know the difference between feeling hungry and feeling lonely, and give you clues whether she wants food or a cuddle.

**You've helped her to recognise these different feelings by responding to her hunger with food and her loneliness with cuddles.**

**Your baby will begin to know what she wants – simple things like wanting to hold a toy or to be picked up.**

- Her wants may not always be the same as yours and, for the first time, you may feel yourself clashing with her will!
- She now recognises the important, familiar people in her world. By 9 months, she will be shy with strangers, and for a while, she might not even want to be too close to people she knows, such as her grandparents, but this will change.

**It's a very sociable age, and she'll love playing and chatting with familiar people.**

## Eating and mouthing

Your baby will put everything in his mouth.

His lips and tongue are the most sensitive part of his body and give him lots of information about texture, shape and taste.

### Safety is very important.

- Your baby will start to eat puréed and mashed solids, and then move on to soft finger food, such as toast (under your supervision).
- At first, it is hard for him to work out the eating action because he's used to sucking, so keeping food inside his mouth can be hard!
- Just because the mashed pumpkin gets spat out doesn't mean he dislikes it. He's still learning how to keep it inside his mouth and swallow it.
- Different food textures also feel very strange at first.

## Moving

At some time between 9 and 12 months, she will be able to:

- roll over from front to back and back to front
- sit alone for a few moments when you put her into a sitting position, then manage to sit by herself without falling over
- do push-ups when she's on her tummy – she'll be able to lift her head and chest off the floor and support herself on outstretched arms
- start to move while on her tummy, first by pulling herself along on her arms – then crawling on all fours
- reach for a rattle and shake it
- swap a toy from one hand to the other
- find her feet, play with them and put them in her mouth.



## Speech and language

While she has been cooing and babbling for many weeks, your baby's sounds will become more like real words.

Your baby enjoys making sounds and she knows that she has made them.

She will:

- try different sounds like clicks, lip bubbles and raspberries, as well as make word-like sounds, and copy the sounds you make
- use lots of different sounds to express different emotions – frustrated grunts, and squeals and giggles of delight
- listen carefully when you speak to her, and talk back with her babbling sounds
- probably be putting a vowel and a consonant together, like 'muum' or 'bubub'.

She might say 'ma-ma-ma', but doesn't yet know that this sound is a word she can use when she wants mum.

She'll keep repeating these sounds as she works out how to make the noises.

## Hearing

Your baby will turn towards familiar sounds and voices, and want to make sounds himself, not just by 'talking' but by banging things together.

## Seeing

Your baby can now focus on small objects. He's also developing a perception of depth, so can become afraid of heights and falling.

By 9 months, he can not only see a change in floor level, but can understand that it is scary. Despite this, his desire to move may be stronger than the fear, so he may try, for example, to roll off the change table.

## Activities

Your baby loves to touch and grasp, and 'make things happen' – shaking, banging and pulling objects.



These activities are great fun and help him to understand that he has an effect on the world – he can DO things to it.

He is learning about up and down, and coming and going, and loves to play games that act these things out.

Your baby will love:

- you looking into his eyes and chatting with him
- lying on his back and grabbing his feet
- lying on his tummy and reaching for brightly coloured toys or paper
- you playing 'here's your nose – here's mummy's nose'
- dropping his toy from the highchair or stroller, over and over, and delight in watching you pick it up and give it back to him
- playing 'ahh boo' as you bring your face quickly down to his tummy
- playing 'peek-a-boo' as you hide your face behind a book or cloth, and say his name when you come out.

Most of all, your baby needs to be and have fun with people, especially you and others who are close to them.

**People are much more interesting than things.**

## Summary

### Social and emotional

**Your baby will probably:**

- know familiar people and start to withdraw from strangers
- start to become anxious if she can't see you (her main carer)
- begin to turn around when she hears her name
- stretch up her arms to be picked up
- initiate gestures, such as poking out her tongue.

**Talk with your doctor or child health nurse if:**

- your baby shows no obvious pleasure in being with people
- he's not making eye contact with people
- even you (his main caregiver) can't comfort him.

### Motor skills

**Your baby probably:**

- brings objects to his mouth by 6 months
- starts to move around by 8 months (rolling, crawling)
- sits without support by 8 to 9 months.

### Talk with your doctor or child health nurse if:

- your baby is not interested in and reaching for objects by 8 months
- she's not sitting by 9 months
- she holds her body stiff and you can't put her in a sitting position.

### Daily activity

#### Your baby can probably:

- hold a bottle to drink
- start to drink from a cup you are holding, by 6 to 8 months
- hold a spoon, but can't use it, by 7 months
- start to try some 'solid' foods.

### Understanding

#### Your baby can probably:

- look for a fallen object by 7 months
  - play 'peek-a-boo' games
- But she can't understand 'no' or 'danger'.

#### Talk with your doctor or child health nurse if:

- your baby doesn't recognise his mother
- he doesn't show interest in his surroundings.

### Speech and language

#### Your baby can probably:

- babble by 6 to 7 months, making one and two syllable sounds – 'da-da'
- listen to a person speaking then 'answer' with babbling sounds.

#### Talk with your doctor or child health nurse if:

- your baby doesn't babble, copy, or make other sounds when someone talks to her.



### ALERT!

#### Talk to your doctor or community health nurse if, by nine months, your child is:

- NOT sitting up without help
- NOT smiling and laughing out loud
- NOT grasping, holding and shaking things
- NOT reaching out for objects and putting them into his mouth
- NOT turning towards you when you call his name
- NOT beginning to try some 'solid' foods
- NOT making lots of different sounds.

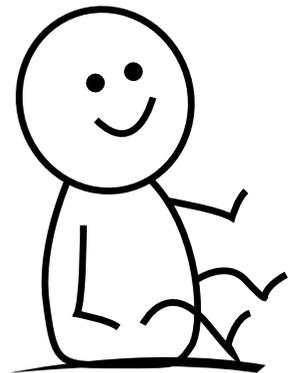
### Your baby is unique

Every baby is different and may develop at different rates. So, if your baby does not do some of these things, he may be 'working' on a different area of learning and development. However, babies usually follow the same pattern of development, and it's good to feel that your baby is developing normally, in his own unique way. If you are worried about your baby's development, or if he is very different from other babies, talk with your doctor or child health nurse. If there is a problem, it's better to get help early.

### SAFETY

You need to watch a baby who is moving and putting everything into her mouth, **all the time**. She can quickly swallow small objects or crawl into unsafe places.

Babies are NOT able to understand about danger. Lock away unsafe objects or put them high out of reach.



## For more information contact

- **HealthyWA**  
[www.healthywa.wa.gov.au](http://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au)
- **Local child health nurse**
- **Local family doctor**
- **Ngala Helpline** (8am–8pm everyday)  
(08) 9368 9368 (Outside metro 1800 111 546)  
[www.ngala.com.au](http://www.ngala.com.au)
- **Raising Children Network**  
[www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au)
- **Kidsafe WA** (8.30am–5pm weekdays)  
(08) 6244 4880 (Outside metro 1800 802 244)  
[www.kidsafewa.com.au](http://www.kidsafewa.com.au)
- **Red Nose** (Sids and Kids)  
[rednose.com.au](http://rednose.com.au)



We've used 'he' and 'she' in turn - please change to suit your child.

**This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.**

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