

Six Months to One Year

Developmental Tasks

Learning to trust others and be secure in the world

Improving muscle coordination and becoming mobile

Acquiring increased control of head, hands, fingers, legs, etc., as the nervous system continues to develop

Learning spatial concepts (up, down, near, far) and how to manipulate and move in the surrounding environment

Learning to adjust to short periods of separation from the primary caregiver



What's Happening in the Brain?

During this stage, the child's brain is:

- ❖ Rapidly developing, especially the higher level cerebral cortex, which influences fine motor skills like a pincer grasp, as well as color vision, attachment, and the motor pathways
- ❖ Sensitive to nutrition—when infants do not receive adequate protein and calories in their diet, their physical and mental health is affected
- ❖ “Wired” to learn all the languages in the world; however, babies between 6 and 12 months now prefer the sounds of the language(s) spoken by their caregivers

Domains

Physical

Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
From 8 months, begins to crawl; from 9 months, may begin to walk	Provide experiences that involve arm and leg exercise, but be sure dangerous objects are out of reach.
Learns to let go of objects with hands	Playing at “dropping things” helps the child learn about the physical world, so be patient about picking things up and enjoy the game.
Puts everything into his/her mouth	Provide child with opportunity to use hands and fingers (finger foods, water play, toys, etc.).
Begins teething	Be especially patient with child's crankiness; provide things on which to chew.
Is physically unable to control bowels	Do not attempt to potty train at this time.

Emotional

Needs to feel sure that someone will always take care of him/her	Consistently meet the child's needs related to hunger, cleanliness, warmth, sensory stimulation, being held, and interacting with an adult (and don't listen to those who claim you will “spoil” him/her by doing so).
Becomes unhappy when mother or primary caregiver leaves	Expect fussiness during mother or primary caregiver's absence; provide comfort.
Draws away from strangers	Proceed slowly in introducing the child to strangers.
Needs to be held and cuddled with warmth and love	Generously provide physical comforts. (No baby was ever “spoiled” by too much physical contact. If you don't agree, watch puppies or kittens nestle near their mothers; they quickly become independent in caring for themselves.)

Social

Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
Finds mother (or primary caregiver) extremely important	Provide consistent care by one person.
"Talks" to others, using babbling sounds	Talk to the child (using simple words), and both verbally and nonverbally acknowledge and respond to the child's efforts at communication.
Starts to imitate behaviors of others	Model the behaviors you want the child to copy.
Eating becomes a major source of interaction with the world	Provide a diet varied in color and texture. When able to sit upright, include the infant at the table at family meal time in a high chair. Be sure to strap child in securely.
Does not "play nicely" with other infants, but will instead poke, pull, and push	Don't expect the child to play well with others, because other children merely appear as objects or toys and not as equal human beings.

Mental

Needs adequate nutrition to support brain and body development	Continue to breast or bottle feed; discuss with pediatrician when it is appropriate to offer healthy solid food choices. Provide a diet varied in color and texture.
Learns through the physical senses, especially by way of the mouth	Provide toys and games that involve and stimulate all five senses.
Likes to put things in and take things out of mouth, cupboards, boxes, etc.	Keep toys with loose parts and other small objects away from the child.
Likes to repeat the same behaviors, but also likes to see new things	Repeat words and favorite activities and begin to introduce the child to new activities (grocery shopping, trips to the park, etc.).
Likes to hear objects named and begins to understand familiar words ("eat," "ma-ma," "bye-bye," "doggie")	Say the names of objects as the child sees or uses them, and begin to look at very simple picture books with the child.
May not speak until age one or later	Don't be overly concerned when a child doesn't talk quite as soon as others.

Indicators Related to Developmental Lag or Potential Trauma

Seizures

Crying frequently and easily

Passivity; withdrawal; lack of initiative; lack of response to stimulating people, toys, and pets

(Note: Such problems are often interrelated: the passive child is less likely to develop the skills needed to explore the world, such as climbing and crawling, and the resulting limited experience may manifest itself in slow learning and inability to take risks.)

Rejecting contact/avoiding being touched