



Six-Month Handout

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Half a year is behind you, a remarkable accomplishment. If you haven't started pureed foods thus far, that's fine. The American Academy of Pediatrics actually recommends starting at six months, so you're doing fine to begin now. For the particulars of this introduction, refer back to the extensive discussion in the four-month handout. At six months if you're into the process of pureed foods, then you're at a time to continue expanding on the variety of foods being offered to the baby. Remember to feed mostly plants, but remember that the iron and zinc available in the flesh foods are micronutrients that are in some jeopardy unless flesh foods are consumed in at least limited quantities on a regular basis. This issue with the iron status of the baby is compelling enough that we will measure blood levels for anemia at the nine-month check-up on every baby. If we had an easy, accurate and meaningful test for blood zinc levels we might do that as well. Remember to work on variety and be willing to "fight" to expand the arsenal of foods of all varieties the baby will embrace. It's also time to get a cup with a straw or spout and begin the several month process of replacing the bottle with a cup. In the beginning of this process, I'd use water only as most babies wear more than they drink. There's not a big nutritional need for the water as most of the diet is still breast milk or formula. So limiting to a few ounces per day is reasonable. Depending on the skill level of your baby, at or after nine months, putting breast milk or formula in the cup would make good sense.

Also, remember that the baby is old enough to move from the protective environment of his crib in your room to the crib in the "nursery". This is just another step in the life long emancipation of the baby. If you've been good about encouraging sleeping habits, you should be getting at least six to eight sustained hours of sleep at night. If you haven't been good, unless you're willing to put the unpleasant burden of retraining on the shoulders of the baby, this pattern of repetitive nighttime waking will likely continue. There are a number of internet sources that talk about "trained night feeders", "trained



night awakeners", and advice about changing the pattern. Richard Ferber wrote an entire book on the subject quite some years ago. This is well known enough that some people refer to the retraining process as "Feberizing the Baby". Families involved in this process often resolve not to train the second or subsequent babies to fall asleep in the same manner.

Soon, or for some already, the baby is beginning to move around the house. "Child-proofing" the home is now an urgent need. The Internet is full of lists of suggested cautions, so go on-line, get knowledgeable and get busy. It's reasonable to believe that the curiosity of every child insures that "If it can go wrong, it will" unless you're prepared. Outside of your own home at relatives' homes and while travelling, special unanticipated hazards will loom, so be vigilant in your observation of the baby / child.

Travelling outside the United States with infants and children raises plenty of special concerns. Vaccine protection for Measles, Influenza, Yellow Fever, Meningitis, and Hepatitis A is a special need that needs to be addressed weeks to months before travel to be optimally effective. Travel associated food borne illness and malaria, are likely sources of concerns depending on the travel destination. The travel section of the CDC website at www.cdc.gov is the perfect site to visit for specific information on a range of pertinent subjects. For our families where one or both of the parents is foreign born and you're travelling "home" to see the extended family, don't get caught in the naïve belief that because you grew up there and have always travelled back and forth without issues, that the baby can do the same. Remember, this child has not had the benefits of living there for an extended period, does NOT have the acquired immunity that you do and is far more vulnerable because of that and because of his youth. You'll be travelling with an American passport and a friendly reception can't be assumed in every quadrant of the world. Civil unrest is the rule in some countries and both of these issues may influence some of the decisions you make when travelling. The U.S. State Department website can be an excellent resource as well. Prepare ahead and the likelihood of safe and pleasant travel is more certain.