



Let's Grow

Issue #4 - 4-6 Months

Baby on the Move!

What a fun little person your seven-month-old is! They are very aware of themselves and the world around them. Babies this age often like to be around people and enjoy interactive games like “pat-a-cake.”

As your child starts to move around, they become more independent and curious about things around them. You can encourage this more active stage by giving them as much floor time as possible. Be sure to maintain constant supervision and plan ahead with childproofing for safety.

By eight months, their independence grows. They may want to feed themselves, which will be messy, but also very entertaining. Your baby may now resist doing something that they don't want to do, such as putting on a coat or snowsuit.

Babies like to laugh, and they like you to laugh with them. Separation anxiety may become stronger by nine months of age. They may find it easier to separate from you if their caregiver is familiar. Your very social and charming nine-month-old loves to explore. They love to copy you and everyone else! Play with your baby. Sing with your baby. Read with your baby.

Special Moments

*Make a memory with your children,
Spend some time to show you care;
Toys and trinkets can't replace those
Precious moments that you share.*

—Elaine Hardt

Feeding & Nutrition

Joining Family Meals

The time has come for your baby to gradually join you in eating regular family food. It is good for them to continue having breastmilk as you continue giving them complementary solid foods. The World Health Organization advises breastfeeding up to 2 years and beyond. So, if you are breastfeeding you do not need to stop now – just continue adding iron-rich and nutritious solid foods.

At this age, babies are interested in trying new foods. Try adding herbs and spices that your family enjoys to their food too. If you add more textures and tastes into their diet now, they will be more likely to enjoy a greater variety of foods later. Offer a variety of food textures between 6 and 9 months. It may take many tries to get used to a new food. There will be times when something goes in and promptly comes right back out again.

That's quite normal and part of how babies learn to eat new foods. Always stay with your baby when they are eating.



Making Baby Food

Other than iron-fortified cereals, specialty infant or toddler processed meals and snacks are not necessary. Making your own baby food from family meals will help to develop your baby's taste preferences, even from this young age. Mash some of your supper into a lumpy texture or offer small soft pieces for your child to pick up and put to their mouth.

Tips for Success

- It is not necessary for your child to have teeth. They can chew with their gums.
- Keep offering a variety of foods in different textures from each of the food groups.
- Start mixed infant cereals after all single grains have been tried.
- Your child's taste buds are sensitive enough to enjoy food without adding fat, salt, or sugar but other herbs and spices may be appropriate.
- Encourage your child to drink from an open cup.
- Allow your child to decide how much to eat of what you offer them. Your baby will close their mouth, turn their head away or push food away when they are full. Never try to force a baby to eat.
- Although they continue to have breastmilk, tap water is an excellent thirst quencher. Babies that are introduced to plain water will prefer to drink it.
- Between 9-12 months you can start giving pasteurized whole cow's milk in a cup (Homogenized, 3.25% M.F.).
- They don't need juice! Juice (even 100% unsweetened) and fruit flavoured beverages have a lot of sugar and should be avoided. Fruit has more fibre and is a better choice than juice.

For more about introducing solids see [Feeding Your Baby: A guide to help you introduce solid foods](#) and see the Video: [Learning to self feed - Unlock Food.](#)



Prevent Choking

Babies may love eating solid food, but do not feed them foods that are hard, small and round, or smooth and sticky. This includes foods such as raw carrots, hot dogs, whole grapes, hard candies, popcorn, peanuts, and sunflower seeds. Always supervise them when they are eating and include them in family mealtimes!

Between six and nine months of age, keep offering iron rich foods. Along with these, you can offer vegetables, fruit, other grain products and pasteurized milk products like cheese and yogurt. Between nine and 12 months, you can start giving pasteurized whole cow's milk in a cup (Homogenized, 3.25% M.F.).

If you haven't taken an infant CPR & First Aid course yet, now is a great time. Call 211 to find out about classes in your area or visit www.redcross.ca/what-we-do/first-aid-and-cpr or [St John Ambulance Saving Lives at Work, Home and Play | St. John Ambulance \(sja.ca\)](#)

Caring for Baby

My First Tooth!

Healthy baby teeth are important for eating, smiling, talking, and keeping a place for adult teeth. Have you noticed that your baby has red cheeks and red swollen gums? Have they been drooling more, chewing on everything they can get into their mouth, eating less, or fussing more? Any of these symptoms can let you know that they are working on cutting their first teeth. This can happen anywhere between 6 to 10 months of age. The first teeth to arrive are usually the two in the centre of the lower jaw.

Teething is a normal part of getting ready to eat solid food, but it might make them grumpy for a few days. These symptoms should disappear when the tooth begins to show. Please remember that vomiting (throwing up) or a high fever, are not signs or symptoms of teething. These could be signs of illness, or another problem so talk to your healthcare provider if you are worried.

Tips to Help with Teething

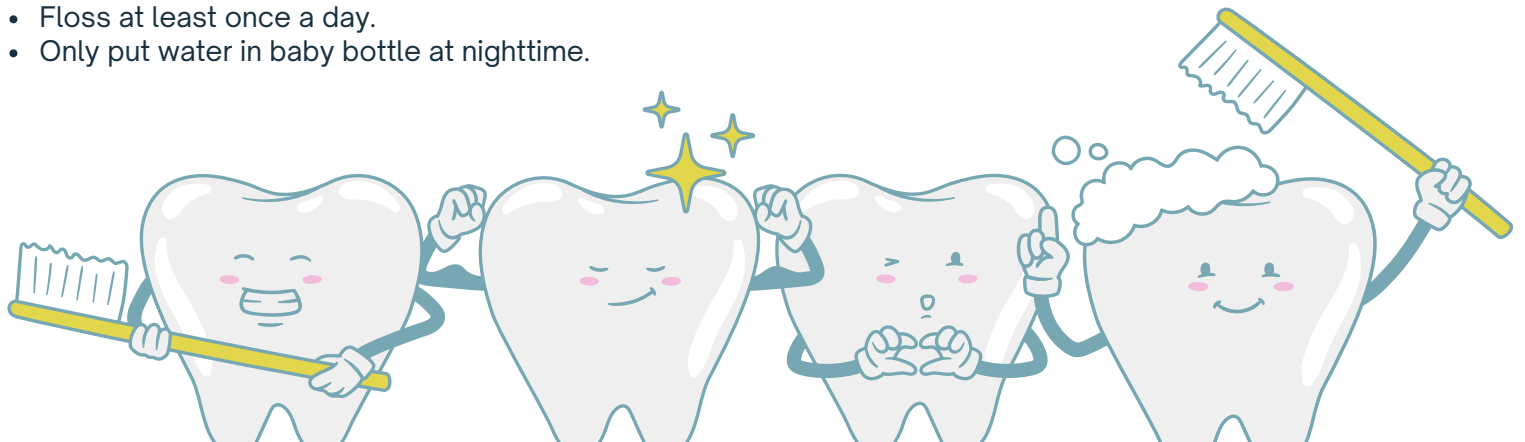
- Rub their gums with a finger or small cold spoon
- Let them chew on a teething ring
- Comfort them with cuddles
- Apply gentle pressure with a cold washcloth

Baby's First Tooth

- Cleaning a baby's mouth even before teeth appear is important. This can be done with a clean damp washcloth or gauze.
- Around 6-10 months the first teeth arrive. Usually the 2 bottom front teeth.
- As the teeth come in babies may tend to be grumpy due to the teething process.
- No toothpaste is needed at this stage.

Prevent Tooth Decay

- Tooth decay or cavities is the most common chronic disease in early childhood.
- Limit snacking or grazing on foods. Having set mealtimes and snack times is best for teeth.
- Limit sugary foods and drinks.
- Drinking water is best for teeth.
- Lift your child's lip and check teeth once a month. Look for any white or chalky areas as these could be the start of tooth decay.
- Remove plaque and debris from teeth daily. Brush 2 times a day. Use a soft toothbrush and replace it every 3 months.
- Floss at least once a day.
- Only put water in baby bottle at nighttime.



Free Dental Programs & Services

Children and youth 0-17 years of age who need dental services may be eligible for the Healthy Smiles Ontario (HSO) Program. Healthy Smiles Ontario is a government funded dental program that provides free preventative, routine and emergency dental services to those who qualify. Children are automatically enrolled if they receive assistance under Temporary Care Assistance, Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities or their family receives Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support.

*For Ontario Works recipients living in a First Nations community, your children are not automatically enrolled in HSO. Apply online by visiting: www.ontario.ca/healthysmiles, apply by mail by picking up an application from any Service Ontario office or contact your local Public Health Unit

Overall Tips to Have Healthy Teeth

- Have regular check-ups with your dentist. First visits should start when children turn one year old.
- Fluoride helps strengthen teeth. No toothpaste is needed until all the baby teeth have erupted. Just use water at this stage. A small rice size amount of toothpaste is recommended once they are able to spit it out. After that and up to adulthood, only a pea-size amount of toothpaste is needed when brushing.
- Eat healthy foods.



Are Play Areas Baby Proof?

As your child begins to crawl and explore, they need a safe place to practice new skills and they need more supervision. They also have no sense of danger or caution at this stage and rely on you to keep them safe. Attach locks to cupboards, cover electrical outlets and use safety gates. Get down on the floor and check out one room at a time. Remove any objects that may harm them.

Smoke-Free Homes & Vehicles

If you are smoking or vaping (including cannabis), please don't smoke around your child. If they are exposed to smoke regularly, they are likely to get more colds, ear infections, bronchitis, and asthma. They are also twice as likely to die of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) than babies who are in smoke-free homes and vehicles.

There is no safe level of smoke, especially because children have faster breathing rates than adults and so can absorb more smoke into their lungs. If you must smoke, please do it outside, and wash your hands when you are done. Ask your friends and relatives to do the same when they are around your child. Please keep cigarettes, vapes, and ashtrays out of reach. You might not be ready to quit, but if you are, talk to your healthcare provider or public health about getting help – you can call Grey Bruce Public Health at 519-376-9420 Ext 7 to reach the Quitting support line. There are free services and medications to help you on your way. Find out more at our website: [Quitting \(publichealthgreybruce.on.ca\)](http://publichealthgreybruce.on.ca)

Routines

Are your routines starting to fall into place? Your baby has now joined in on regular family mealtimes with several snacks in between.

Your baby's bedtime routine may be a little more regular now as well. You can enjoy reading a bedtime story together. It's so nice to snuggle up with your baby. This is fantastic bonding time. At this age, your baby will enjoy the books with their hands and mouth, as well as their ears. By reading aloud you also give your baby the precious gift of language development and a lifetime love of books.

First Eye Exam

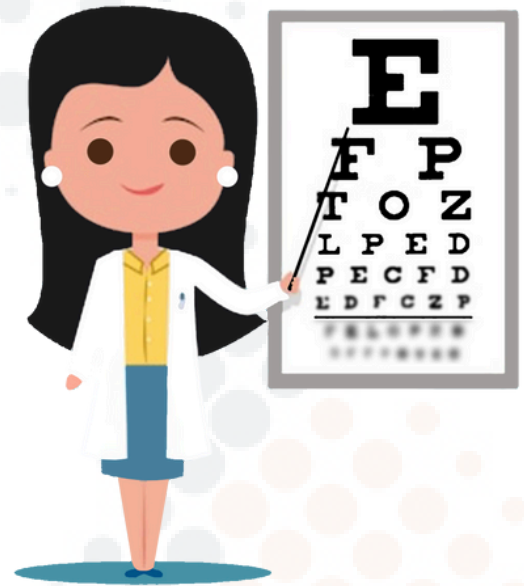
Don't worry, there's no need for your baby to study for this test! They won't have to read the eye chart for an accurate and complete eye examination to be done. It is important to get your child's eyes checked because how they see the world around them can affect how they learn and grow.

An Optometrist is a doctor who has a degree in optometry. Optometrists are the primary providers of eye health and vision care. Optometrists are members of a regulated health profession. They are qualified to provide comprehensive eye exams, diagnose, and treat diseases of the eye, and prescribe and dispense eyeglasses and other visual aids.

Your optometrist (eye doctor) will check their eyes for:

- Sharpness of vision – How much detail can they see and use?
- Eye coordination – Can their eyes see and follow moving objects? Can their eyes tell how deep or how high objects are?
- Physical problems - Do all the parts of their eyes look healthy? Do they have any problems like a lazy eye, a blocked tear duct or pinkeye?

A yearly eye exam is covered by OHIP for children 0 to 19. The best news is that with early detection and treatment, many vision problems are REVERSIBLE and in some cases PREVENTABLE!



Positive Parenting

Building Trust

Your child needs you to help them feel safe and secure. If they are scared, hurt, or upset, they need you to show them that everything is okay. Feeling safe and secure will help them feel relaxed so they can use their brain for learning and growing. When you set limits and create a daily routine for your family, this also helps your child trust you and the world around them.

At your child's age, they do not understand right and wrong. Avoid yelling at them. They don't know what you're saying or who you are angry with, but they do understand your tone of voice. Loud and angry voices will frighten them and cause them to feel stressed. At times when you're frustrated, take a deep breath and count to 10 or talk quietly.

Do not use physical punishment like slapping hands, swatting, or spanking. It will only teach your child to hit. They trust you to show them right from wrong, but not to hurt them. They will copy everything you do. When it comes to keeping them out of danger, try to focus on helping them learn. Stay calm and use words such as "hot", "danger", "brrr", "wet", instead of "no". This gives them a larger vocabulary and understanding.

Healthy Growth & Development

These developmental milestones have been provided to show some of the skills that mark the progress of young children as they learn to communicate. You may use these milestones to help monitor your child's development. For more information visit [Early child development | ontario.ca](https://www.earlychilddevelopment.ca)

By 9 months most children can:

- respond to their name
- respond to the telephone ringing or a knock at the door
- understand being told "no"
- get what they want through sounds and gestures (for example, reaching to be picked up)
- play social games with you (for example, peek-a-boo)
- enjoys being around people
- babbles and repeats sounds (for example, babababa, duhduhduh)

Let's Play

Your child loves to listen to your voice when you're happy, excited, proud, or just talking quietly about the world around them. The best talks are those when you praise them and show them how much they mean to you. They like when you talk calmly with them, sing to them, and kiss them. It will make you feel better too! Your child will connect these fun times with good feelings about themselves. What a great way to encourage their talking and self-esteem at the same time.

Your child will love to make sounds. Their voice will change levels depending on if they are feeling angry, content, or hungry. Your child is starting to understand that sounds have meanings. While dressing them, name the items of clothing as you put them on. "Here is a sock. Let's put on your pants." Try singing a song or playing Peek-a-boo!

It's time for your child to explore their world and move their body! It is recommended that infants are not restrained for more than 1 hour at a time (e.g., in a stroller or highchair). They need to be out in a safe area as much as possible playing, crawling, and sitting up by their self. They need to move and play to grow healthy and strong muscles and bones.

Here are some ideas that have worked for other parents:

- Give them a safe place to play.
- Keep valuable and breakable objects out of reach or put them away for a while.
- Redirection: If they are doing something that you want them to stop, give them something else to play with.
- To help keep your family active, turn music on in family areas instead of screens. Movement with music is fun no matter your age!
- Go outside to play and move your bodies. Remember to closely supervise them!



Enjoyable Ways to Help Them Grow

Your child will love to watch what you do and listening to what you say. They will become a copycat when you play with them.

They like to play with:

- Books made of cloth or board.
- Pull-apart toys. Show them how to pull them apart and put them in a small bin or dishpan. You can say, “Oh! You pulled those apart. Do you want me to put them back together with you?”
- Blocks to build up and knockdown.
- Pots, pans, or drums to bang on.
- Toy pianos. Show them how to push the keys to make noise and help them play.
- Nesting cups – cups of different sizes to put together, take apart and stack.
- Create your own mini photo album, you can say, “Look Abby, here’s your mommy. Who’s she holding? That’s you!”

Keep toys with small parts out of reach. If it can fit through a toilet paper roll, it’s probably too small. Adult supervision of play is important for safety.

Taking Care of Yourself

It can be helpful to talk to a supportive friend, especially when that friend has children of similar ages. The problems don’t seem quite as bad, and sharing happy experiences allows you to enjoy them again and again. Try to take one day at a time. Take care of yourself. Here are a few friendly reminders:

- Follow [Canada’s Food Guide](#) and move your body regularly.
- Get as much sleep as you can. Have a nap when your baby naps.
- Do things you enjoy.
- Have enjoyable contact with other adults. Try visiting your local EarlyON Child & Family Centre. EarlyON Child and Family Centres offer free, high-quality programs for families and children from birth to 6 years old. You can learn and play with your child, meet people and get advice from early childhood professionals. [Find an EarlyON child and family centre | ontario.ca](#)
- If you can, spend at least a few minutes each day by yourself. Even a bath can be a nice quiet time to relax and reflect.

Pregnancy, the birth of a baby or an adoption brings physical, emotional and social changes. Adjusting to the new roles and relationships is not always easy. Some women are unaffected while for others, the severity of the mood disorder varies from the normal baby blues to the medical emergency postpartum psychosis. Life with a new baby is stressful for partners and other family members as well.

A postpartum mood disorder is a mental health disorder striking within the first year of giving birth. The resource from Best Start, [Life with a new baby is not always what you expect](#), provides more information about Post Partum Mood Disorders. The resource [Managing Depression: A Self-help Skills Resource for Women Living With Depression During Pregnancy, After Delivery and Beyond](#) describes three depression management skills – reactivating your life, thinking realistically and solving problems.

For local resources visit [Mental Health & Wellness \(publichealthgreybruce.on.ca\)](#).

For more information

- The Healthy Babies Healthy Children program provides information and home visits to parents who are eligible and need more support during pregnancy, after their baby is born, and as their child grows. For more information or to self-refer to the program visit Grey Bruce Public Health's website at [Home Visiting Program \(publichealthgreybruce.on.ca\)](https://publichealthgreybruce.on.ca) or call Grey Bruce Public Health at 519-376-9420 or 1-800-263-3456 extension 5.
- 211 quickly and confidentially connects people to social services and community programs across Ontario. 211 is available by phone for those looking to speak to a friendly voice or by text, online search, email, or chat. Service is available in multiple languages.
- Call 811 to find health services or information or get health advice from a registered nurse. Toll free TTY line: 1-866-797-0007. Live chat is also available. Health811 - [Health811 \(ontario.ca\)](https://health811.onario.ca)
 - Looking for guidance about food and nutrition, including infant and child feeding? Residents of Ontario can connect with a Registered Dietitian to access free nutrition information and advice by calling 811 or starting a chat at Health811.
- Caring for Kids, a website developed by the Canadian Pediatric Society, provides parents with information about their child's health and well-being. [Home | Caring for kids \(cps.ca\)](https://caringforkids.cps.ca)
- EarlyON Child and Family Centres offer free programs for families and children from birth to 6 years old. You can learn and play with your child, meet people and get advice from early childhood professionals.
 - Find an EarlyON child and family centre:
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/find-earlyon-child-and-family-centre>
 - For more information about Grey County:
<https://www.grey.ca/resident-services/community-services/early-learning-and-child-care/earlyon>
 - For more information about Bruce County:
<https://www.brucecounty.on.ca/human-services/earlyon>
- Discover how to prevent injuries before they happen – Parachute:
www.parachutecanada.org/injury-topics
- For more information about many of these topics see Your Guide to Postpartum Health and Caring for Your Baby: [postpartum-health-guide.pdf \(canada.ca\)](https://www.canada.ca/en/services/health/postpartum-health-guide.pdf)
- OMama is a website and a mobile application (app) that connects you to trusted, evidence-informed pregnancy, birth, and early parenting information (focusing on resources in Ontario, Canada). [Home - OMama](https://www.ontario.ca/page/omama)
- La Leche League Canada: Breastfeeding support www.lllc.ca
- Transport Canada: www.tc.gc.ca/roadsafety/kids
- Health Canada Product Safety -
<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/health/product-safety.html>

