



Activities for whānau at home

Six months – One year olds

Peekaboo



You will need:

*- A silk or chiffon scarf,
a small blanket, or your
hands*

This fun game may make your baby laugh when they see your face pop up suddenly. You can play peekaboo by covering your face and pretending like you're hiding from

them. Then show your face and say "Peekaboo!". You can also do this with a scarf or blanket. Your baby will probably giggle uncontrollably.

This is a great game for helping develop the fine motor skills of your 6-month-old baby. This game also teaches the concept of object permanence, an important milestone during the second half of the first year. When babies learn object permanence, they understand that people or objects exist even when they aren't visible. It also helps the infant manage small stressors in a controlled environment.

Singing

Parents have been singing lullabies to their babies for ages. You can introduce your baby to the soothing world of music by singing to them. You can be creative, making up songs and singing them to your child.

You can sing songs during bath time or any other activity. Sing fast and slow, change your pitch, and try different funny voices to teach your baby auditory discrimination. Singing introduces your baby to sounds and how to differentiate between them.



Clapping



Clapping is another activity that your 6-month-old baby will enjoy. Encourage your child to clap themselves and clap along with them. Clapping produces sound, so it gives them extreme joy. You can take your baby's hands in your own and gently

make the clapping motions for them.

You can also encourage your baby to copy or imitate you. You can make clapping more interesting and fun by using songs or rhymes. Clapping can help your 6-month-old baby learn imitation and about different sounds.

Reading

When your baby is 6 months old, you may already be reading to them. Try books with tactile components and pictures. Make sure to read slowly and add emotions and gestures while reading. Encourage your child to act surprised or laugh to make the activity more interactive.

Choose books that are colourful, short, and have lots of pictures. Since babies at this age may chew books, pick thick ones (like board books) that are designed especially for them. Reading helps develop the listening and language skills of 6-month-old babies. It also helps in the development of touch and sight.

Flying



Making your baby fly is a great activity for 6-month-olds. Put your baby on your lap with their tummy facing down. Hold onto them with both hands. Carefully supporting their midsection, gently lift your baby up and down, forwards and back.

Your baby will laugh loudly and enjoy the surprise of zooming around in different directions. Flying like this helps stimulate and strengthen your 6-month-old's body.

Sit-ups



Muscle strength is very important for a growing infant. Even babies can use sit-ups to help strengthen and tone! As long as your baby has good head control, you can lay them on their back and gently guide them to a slightly seated position.

Holding onto your baby's hands, lower them onto their back and then back up, just like a sit-up. This is a great activity for enhancing the head control and motor skills of your 6-month-old baby.

By 6 months, your baby is learning and becoming engaged

in a lot of new things. Babies at this age grow rapidly, and there are lots of activities and games that can help them develop quickly and have fun at the same time.

Some great games and activities for 6-month-old babies include peekaboo, kicking, tummy time, making bubbles, singing, clapping, reading a book, flying, and doing sit-ups. No matter what you do, playing games and interacting with your baby helps enhance their development.

Kicking



As your child grows, they play more and start enjoying physical activities. Kicking is one of the games that can help integrate the sensory and physical developmental skills of 6-month-old babies. Take some coloured pieces of cloth — like napkins or burp cloths — and tuck them under the cushions of the sofa with a bit hanging over, like a curtain.

Place your baby on their back with their feet touching the cloth and their knees bent. Your baby will begin kicking the piece of cloth with their feet. This game helps your baby learn chin tucking, sensory integration, cause and effect, and body awareness.

Tummy time



Tummy time is important, even if your baby protests loudly. Try lying on the ground with your child. Look them in their eyes while you are on your belly. You can lay your child on a soft towel and roll them gently from one side to the other.



Blowing bubbles



At this age, your baby is able to see far enough that they may be able to focus on bubbles. You can blow bubbles for your baby while they're in the bathtub or if they are out of the house and getting fussy. Bubbles make an easily transportable, cheap, and fascinating game for 6-month-old babies.

You will need:

- Bubble mixture
- Relaxing music

Lay the infant on a soft mat. Put music on and blow bubbles taking care to avoid the mixture falling into the infant's eyes.

This supports eye tracking/muscle development around the eyes, a sense of wonder and concentration.

Dance



If singing baby songs is starting to bore you, turn on the radio, Pandora, or some of your own music collection instead. Hold your baby in your arms or use a carrier and get dancing. Your baby will love to sway side-to-side, bounce up and down, jiggle, wiggle, and boogie!

Take a Walk

Going for a walk is a great way to distract a tired or fussy little one. In a pram, backpack, front pack. Whilst the fresh air is great for both of you it's also a wonderful time of exploration. Take a blanket and find a patch of grass away from others.

Tickle their toes with a leaf, let them feel the grass on their hands and feet. Pick the daisies and dandelions and explore the fauna. Remember to wipe little hands afterwards in case of reaction to irritants.

Mirror

Looking into a large mirror is an awesome activity with a baby. Babies are always interested to play with the baby in the mirror! The motions and expressions catch his eye and hold their interest. Bathroom mirrors work well but also a safe handheld mirror works well for baby to manipulate.

Bouncing on Your Leg

Baby games don't have to be complicated. Baby might like to sit on your lap facing you while you make faces at them. For extra fun you can add a word game e.g., "Ride that horsey into town, watch out baby, don't fall down!" bouncing them on your leg and then tipping them safely backwards.



You could also try different speeds of bouncing e.g., "Smooth road" - sway them side-to-side and say, "A smooth road, a smooth road, a smooth road, a smooth road." Then bounce them gently and say "A bumpy road" four times, then bounce them a little harder and say, "A rough road" four times.

Fabric Dancing



Gather up a bunch of different fabrics – scarves, socks, ribbon, etc – of different lengths, textures, and colours. Play music and move around tossing the fabrics in the air, brushing them past Baby's skin, touching their face with the fabric, and letting him touch them. Try it with quick movements or moving super-slowly.

Shakers



You will need:

- A small canister or plastic water or soft drink bottle with a tight-fitting lid
- Heavy duty tape/scissors
- Small items to put inside the canister or bottle
- Ribbons to tie securely around a bottle neck [optional]

Place small items such as dry lentils or small stones inside a canister or small water or soft drink bottle. Tighten the lid and wrap with tape. Double knot short pieces of ribbon around the neck of the bottle.

Using a shaker gently near an infant can support them to turn their head towards a sound. It can encourage reaching, grasping and developing an understanding of cause and effect.

Johnny Whoops!



A poem with only two words: perfect!

Johnny, Johnny, Johnny, Johnny.

Whoops! Johnny.

Whoops! Johnny.

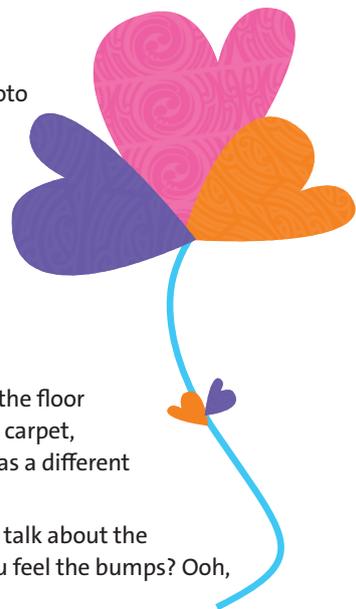
Johnny, Johnny, Johnny, Johnny.

Take your baby's hand in yours with his palm open and fingers facing up. Starting with their little finger, tap each of their fingers one at a time with your index finger and say the word "Johnny" each time. Stop after you touch their index finger.

Slide your finger down the side of their index finger and up their thumb as you say "Whoops!" After you slide up to their thumb tip, say "Johnny." Then, repeat going back to their pinky.

Look at Pictures

Look at pictures in magazines or photo albums with photos of friends and family. Point out the things that you see. Say, "Where's Daddy? Do you see him? There he is! Do you see the clouds? These are clouds..."



Textures Crawl

Arrange different textured items on the floor together – use a bathmat, door mat, carpet, shower curtain, etc. Anything that has a different texture and takes up a bit of space.

Then crawl around on the items and talk about the textures. "This one is smooth. Do you feel the bumps? Ooh, soft!" And so on.

Heuristic play

When children are involved in heuristic play, they are using familiar objects in different ways. It is the process of exploring the different ways to use the objects that is important in the play. The word 'heuristic' comes from the word 'eurisko' which means to learn, discover or reach an understanding of something.

And the phrase 'heuristic play' was a term coined by child psychologist Elinor Goldschmeid in the 1980's to describe the activity of babies and children as they play with and explore the properties of objects from the real world.

For babies and toddlers, Goldschmeid's approach to heuristic play revolves around them using their senses and exploring a treasure basket filled with real-world objects made from any material (apart from plastic) that comes from nature and around the house.

It is through handling and exploring these objects that babies and toddlers begin to make their own choices and decisions and start to gain an understanding of the world around them



Treasure baskets

To begin you will need to put together a treasure basket.

Find a low-sided basket, box or tin and fill it with 20-30 real-life objects. Over time add and rotate items to help encourage new and different learning experiences and to keep interest high. Use safe objects from around the house for infants to explore and mouth [aim for metal, wooden, natural or plastic objects with no small pieces]

Examples of heuristic objects to put in your treasure basket include:

- Egg boxes, small boxes with lids, cardboard tubes, greaseproof paper
- Preserving jar rings, rubber door stops, corks, rubber balls, measuring spoons
- Napkin rings, metal teapots, metal whisks, keys on a ring, metal cookie cutters
- Shower puffs, pot scourers, bottle brushes, pieces of flannel or material, coloured ribbons, pasty brushes
- Pumice, coconut shells, large pebbles, driftwood, bark, pine cones, feathers
- Wooden bowls, wooden spoons, wooden pegs, wooden curtain rings
- Small mirror, bells, measuring spoons, tea strainers, a lemon or orange

Setting up the play area

For heuristic play to be effective you need to set up a relaxed atmosphere, placing the basket in an uncluttered space with all other toys cleared away.

Ensure that the TV is off and set up the area ideally after your baby or toddler has been fed and is feeling settled.

To maintain interest, 30 minutes a day playing with the basket is usually enough. Then put the basket away so that your baby or toddler doesn't tire of the objects.

There's no need to get the basket out every day. A couple of times a week is enough.

Rolling beach ball



You will need: A beach ball

How to:

Play this activity anywhere – indoors or outdoors.

1. Make the baby sit at a distance and roll the beach ball between your hands till you have the little one's attention.
2. Slowly push the ball towards them while prompting them to catch it.
3. Once they manage to lay their hand on the ball, they will try experimenting with the ball by moving it, hitting it or by simply lifting it.

In either case, they are flexing their muscles, making them stronger.

Tugging the string

You will need: String made from soft fibres, yourself

How to:

This fantastic game exercises the six-month-old's grip, which becomes more nimble around this age of four.

1. Take a soft string made from wool or any other soft material, and place one end in the hand of the baby so that they hold it.
2. Take the other end of the string and gently tug at it. The baby may initially let go, but you can prompt them to pull the string towards them, which they will eventually do.

This simple game helps to strengthen the baby's grip and overall flexibility of their fingers. You may even use a mix of colourful intertwined strands that the baby should invariably find attractive.

Baby goes bicycling



Often parents forget to exercise the legs of the baby, which constitute a large chunk of the body's muscle weight. Here is an exercise to provide a necessary activity to the leg muscles.

1. Place the baby on their back on a soft surface and gently lift both the legs.
2. Bend them gently and move them in cyclic motion, as if the baby was pedalling a bicycle.
3. Sing a song or a nursery rhyme to entertain the baby.

Skills developed: Muscle strength, an improved range of muscle motion

These games for your six-month-old aim at the holistic development of the baby. But it is important to keep some points in mind while you play these games so that the infants reap the maximum benefit.



Safety tips for this age and stage:

- Always keep an eye on baby – **adult supervision is the key to preventing injuries**
- **BEING THERE WHERE YOU CAN SEE AND HEAR YOUR CHILDREN AND ARE ABLE TO HELP THEM QUICKLY IS 'ACTIVELY SUPERVISING' THEM.**
- Falls: Your baby can wriggle, move and push against things, and are able to fall off any high surface (i.e. couches, beds, change tables etc)
- Babies will become increasingly mobile, easier for them to put objects in their mouth (tip: objects that fit into a toilet paper roll are not suitable for children under 1)
- Burns: Hot water or drinks are commonly spilled, baby is at high risk of burns with their thin skin.
- Put hot drinks or food in the centre of the table and try not to use a tablecloth or placemats as small children can pull these off the table.
- Always maintain hand contact with baby when in the bath, and stay within reach of your child around water: adult supervision!
- Ensure you check your smoke alarms regularly!
- **The purple section Safety in your Plunket Thriving under Five has details on many of the most common injury prevention topics.**

Acknowledgements

This list of activities has been put together using a number of sources. We would like to acknowledge the following sites that we have used as part of this list.

Flo.health
Todaysparent.com
Babyschooling.com
Under5s.co.nz
Momjunction.com
Lessons4learners.com
Imagination Tree
Scholastic.com
Chelsea.co.nz
Livewellplaytogether.com
Raisingchildren.net.au
SLFP.org.nz
Jugglingwithkids.com
Learning4kids.net
Handsonaswegrow.com
Goodtoknow.co.uk
Mykidstime.com
Pinterest



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