6 Month Milestones and best toys for baby

**Intro**

Welcome to Sense by Meg Faure the podcast that's brought to you by Parent Sense, the app that takes guesswork out of parenting. If you are a new parent, then you are in good company. Your host Meg Faure is a well-known OT infant specialist and the author of eight parenting books. Each week we are going to spend time with new mums and dads just like you to chat about the week's wins, the challenges, and the questions of the moment. Subscribe to the podcast, download the Parent Sense App and catch Meg here every week to make the most of that first year of your little one's life. And now meet your host.

**Meg:** Welcome back Mums and dads. I'm Meg. I am the author of eight parenting titles, including Baby Sense and Weaning Sense, and the founder of the Parent Sense App. And this podcast is really here for you. Each week we have a look at the problems, the challenges, but also the delights of new parenthood. And sometimes I'm joined by a fellow expert in the field like Kath Megaw, dieticians occasionally on with me, Bailey Schneider sometimes chats to me. But this week, as we are most weeks, we actually joined by Cassidy. Cassidy is a first time mom to baby Max, although I don't even know if I can call her first time in in mum anymore, she is such a seasoned mother. So, Cass welcome back and with your almost six month old baby boy. How old is Max now?

**Cass:** He was six months yesterday.

**Meg:** Oh, congratulations, Cassidy, who could have known.

**Cass:** I know, I know. I think, well we say it all the time in so many ways, it's flown by and in so many ways it feels like, you know, he's been around forever in a positive way.

**Meg:** Yeah, wonderful.

**Cass:** Yeah, no, it's been great.

**Meg:** And he's doing so well. I saw some gorgeous photographs of him sitting. He's really sitting well now, isn't he?

**Cass:** Yep, he fully sits and…I mean if he's really tired I still put cushions around him most times anyway, and if he's tired he can flop. He tends to also, if he's really studying something in front of him, sometimes he'll forget to hold himself and just in slow motion. Yesterday I found him, because one of his favorite toys at the moment is he's got thing of eggs, squeaky eggs that are great toys. But I've been putting them in the colander and giving him a wooden spoon and he sort of just plays with that.

**Meg:** With the eggs?

**Cass:** Yeah, exactly, he's making his own scrambled egg and he was studying them and I just looked over and the next thing I knew his face was planted in the colander. Luckily, he's very chilled and doesn't sort of get upset if he falls over or things like that. But, I do feel…He does find himself in some positions, that's for sure.

**Meg:** That's sweet. And talking about toys, I mean those eggs sound so interesting. So at six months old, give me his top three favorite toys.

**Cass:** Do you know it's interesting. It feels a bit like he is starting to get a little bit bored with a lot of toys, so I'm having to try and be creative. So the eggs are definitely up there as one of his, his top toys with or without the colander. Now, he loves his balls, but what I've been interested in is I have a bucket now and I've started—because we've been going around to different places—and I have now a bag of toys that I've been taking and his bucket, I've been taking the balls in the bucket and he loves when you present him with the bucket full of balls and he can sort of turn it upside down and the balls go everywhere, and so that's given the balls a new lease of life, which is great.

**Meg:** That's brilliant

**Cass:** He also has a car, it's interesting, he had a friend round last week, and the friend, absolutely the two of them that was the toy that they both made a beeline for. So I don’t know what this toy has something about the design, but it's got little beads in the wheels and then it's got a ball with a sort of rubber mesh over the top so they can, it looks a bit like a honeycomb, they can pick it up and it's got the colors and different balls and that sort of thing, so he's loving that at the moment. Those are kind of the key and his books. He loves being read a book and things like that.

**Meg:** So quite interesting, when he has the balls in the bucket, does he pick any of them up or does he just up in the bucket?

**Cass:** No, he does pick the balls up. It takes quite a lot. He has to sort of, you know, as often a two-handed approach apart from this one that's got spikes coming. Not like rubber spikes not. So he can get a grip on that. Actually the other thing that just this week has become a favorite toy is blocks, building blocks. And he finds it hysterical if I build a tower in front of him and then he knocks the tower down; that is the funniest thing he's ever seen in his eyes. .

**Meg:** That's great, so really, really interesting that the kind of motor skills that he's investigating there, that he's working on. So a couple of things that building up a tower of blocks at this age and knocking it down is a great game. Moms and dads, if you have not done that with your six month olds, that is definitely a game you need to do. And of course that game is very important because it's the start of cause and effect because it's very, very simple cause which is his push and effect falling over. So later on cause and effect becomes much more complicated. It's like if I push the green button, it makes this noise, you know, and that's when I get into switch toys and if I push this then something pops out of the box, you know, that jack in the box type thing. So a cause and effect is very important and it's actually a cognitive skill, a very important cognitive skill. So he's right at the beginning of that. So that's good.

The other thing that interests me is his picking up balls because I'd be interested to know at this age, he's not really supposed to be able to do voluntary release, although it will be coming shortly. And voluntary releases actually, you know, if he has one ball in his hand and he sees another ball and he wants the other ball rather that he actually lets go of a ball and kind of drops it out of the bucket in intentionally to be able to go in for the second ball. So that's something that you can start to look for. And that intentional or voluntary release is something that'll come up in the next month or so.

**Cass:** Okay. Yeah, I suppose I haven't really paid attention to that yet.

**Meg:** So quite a fun way to do that. To test it is given him toy that's quite interesting and he will either have to hold it with one hand or two hands, try and make it a single handed toy that he can hold with one hand, like a small enough ball, make sure he has to have one in each hands that his hands are fully occupied and then present him with a third one or with something different. Because then what he's got to do is he's got to let go of one in order to get the other one. And they get quite frustrated before they can do voluntary release because they kind of sit there going, right, they want that. So they'll kind of try and hit in with their mouth almost to get it and you're not entirely sure how they're going to be able to get that one because they look, two hands, so what are they going to do? And it takes a bit of time for them to work out that actually they can just let go of one and then they'll be able to get the next one. So that's quite a nice game to play. And the other thing that came to mind while you were talking was that you actually mentioned, I think three, if not four of the bees, and anyone who's been listening to the podcast will know that I love the Five Bees. When people ask me for like, what are the best toys for babies, it is books, blocks, balls, bubbles, an empty box. And if anybody does get a tumble dry or washing machine or anything that's in a big box, please keep it because that's, that's really actually of the five, the number one, which is boxes.

**Cass:** We actually brought a new thermometer the other day and it came in a silver shiny box. And Alex was about to, you know, we got the thermometer and that sort of thing and we were collecting the rubbish and I said, no, no, that is a shiny box, the ultimate box prize. It's an empty box that shines and reflects and it's sort of got that, so yeah, that's been kept and added to the toy bag because I do feel these are toys he's had for quite a while and I can see is part of him as a bit bored with seeing the same toys every single day. But I don't want to buy new toys all the time.

So, it's about trying to be creative with what we have and that's where the friend inspired me with the colander and the wooden spoon idea, that has gone down really well and sort of trying to find kitchen items or things like that and as you said, the boxes that when they come in. His nanny, I think I've already mentioned, made him with an empty bottle, filled it with glitter and water so he can move that around and it changes colors like that. So yeah, it's, you have to get a bit creative, but it's very rewarding because, I don’t know, Max has so many expressions with his…He's got a face full of expression and the eyes go wide and the mouth goes wide when you present him with something new and it's just such a delight to see him. Wow, you know, that real wonder in his eyes.

**Interlude**
This episode is brought to us by Parent Sense, the all-in-one baby and parenting app that helped you make the most of your baby's first year. Don't you wish someone would just tell you everything you need to know about caring for your baby, when to feed them, how to wean them and why they won't sleep. Parent Sense App is like having a baby expert on your phone, guiding you to parent with confidence, get a flexible routine, daily tips and advice personalized for you and your little one. Download Parent Sense App now from your app store, and take the guesswork out parenting.

**Meg:** Well, a good idea to get into is to actually create a box at the top of his cupboard with toys in that he doesn't have access to. And just keep up five toys a week, like really limited, and then otherwise do household objects, which you're doing. And then at the beginning of every week, rotate those toys and get in the next five. And this goes all the way through to the toddler years, like when he turns one, which feels like a long way away, but we almost halfway there, you know, hide half of the toys because he actually will…It'll be really great for him to then go and kind of re-explore the toys as he comes along. It's like a birthday every day, every week for the next kind of few months.

**Cass:** Yeah, absolutely. No, he does get so excited. Yesterday I introduced a sippy cup as well, and that was the most exciting thing he'd ever…He just couldn't quite get over that, and he does this sort of really excited thing with his head.

**Meg:** So it's interesting with the sippy cup and with his bottle now, is he able to use his hands to hold in independently?

**Cass:** Yeah, he is. He's not...What he hasn't obviously doesn't understand is that as…

**Meg:** He's got to tip?

**Cass:** He's go to tip it. So I still sort of have to help. And it is actually quite funny because if when it's very full, he can, he holds it with both hands and I don't have to touch it at all. But then obviously as it starts to drain, I need to help him, and as soon as I take over and hold the bottle, he honestly let go and put his hands behind his head and looks like he's just sitting back relaxing, so funny.

**Meg:** Very funny things babies do. So there's been a lot of fun and games this week with activities. And have there been any challenges this week?

**Cass:** Do you know what, actually, we've had the most wonderful week; we had a social, a friend, as I mentioned, he had a friend over. And it was really interesting because it was the first time I'd seen him with a baby his age interacting. So, I found it fascinating watching how he interacts, and all he wanted to do was hold this baby's hand. Oh, he kept reaching out to hold and the baby actually cried every time Max got hold of his hand, which was rude but it was so interesting. And then it became really clear to me, as I started paying more attention, Max always holds our hands. He's fascinated by our hands. If we want to make him smile or distract him, we just put our hands above him, and he loves Twinkle Twinkle Little Star and things like that. And he loves hands and holds our hands a lot, so that's something he's developed, which I had never really become aware of. And this morning his nanny sent me a picture he was holding and he has a play date every now and again, and he was holding this other baby's foot, and so he's showing real sort of connection social, I don't know if that's…Or it's just a coincidence.

**Meg:** No, no, no. I mean the important thing at this stage is that they have a fascination for other babies and that they’re interested in their faces and are interested in them. They certainly don't play together. In fact, it's a stage of what we call parallel play, which basically means that there's play alongside each other but do nothing together really. So that it's not constructive, it's not cooperative, it doesn't really, you know, build on any games. In fact, it's going to be a while before that he's going to be a toddler before he's actually able to do play. But parallel play is important, you know, and I think what's quite interesting is I talk a lot about self-regulation and being able to regulate very big emotions and that in the trajectory of self-regulation developing from six months onwards, they start to develop, will need to start to develop emotional regulation, which takes him all the way through into the toddler years.

So he's right at the beginning of his journey of emotional regulation. And what you'll find is that if he's really interested in something and you take it away from him, he might even have a temper tantrum now. Like he'll become so frustrated that he'll, I mean I've got videos of babies throwing themselves backwards with frustration because, their mom's cell phone's been taken away from them. And I don’t know if he's starting to do that, but they need to start to between six months and two years old, start to regulate their emotions. Now the only way that you actually learn to regulate emotions is if you have frustrations sometimes. So frustrations actually become quite important. So little frustrations not, I'm not talking about huge frustrations, but little frustrations like, wait a little bit for some food or you can't hold onto the TV remote because you're going to break it and take it away.

So there's things that we do, but the very best challenge or the best provider of frustration is actually another baby. Because another baby will try and take away the toy, push them over, just do unpredictable things as a baby would. And that's actually one of the reasons why social interaction is important because as a parent we very often, it's not that we molly cuddle children, but we make their life relatively kind of smooth sailing for them that they don't have too many frustrations. So we respond to them quickly and we give into them more than…We do because especially with our first borns, because we want the status quo and we want peace in the home, but other toddlers and other babies don't. And so, that's one of the reasons why that kind of social interaction is important.

**Cass:** It's interesting you talk about that actually because one of the other things that I've noticed this week, it's almost like he's become a bit lazy with his rolling, he rolls onto his tummy, he can get back onto his back, but quite often he'll just start getting really frustrated and I'm…Then go, “You know how to do it.” And so I've sort of been really trying to not just go and roll him over because I know he knows how to do it. But also at night, if I'm rolling him over in the day, he then is wanting that potentially in the middle of the night. There's been a couple of times where he's been getting really frustrated and I thought, no, you can do it. And so I have been trying to draw out, but if he cries, I go and put him back, but when he is just shouting in a frustrated way, but he does seem to be getting quite lazy with rolling from front to back.

**Meg:** Yeah, which, of course, we know would happen because that's competition of skills. So he's working on something else at the moment and so he stopped working on rolling. And so…

**Cass:** What is he working on now?

**Meg:** He’s working on bilateral hand use; I mean just what you were saying just now, holding a Sippy cup with two hands.

**Cass:** Yeah.

**Meg:** Holding a bucket with two hands, holding…You described him holding the bucket to take out an egg. All of those are incredibly complicated, because the way that the brain develops is that you first of all use only one side and then you only use the other side, that's the first thing you do. And then what you do—of hands, I'm talking about hand use. And then what you start to do is you start to use both hands symmetrically doing exactly the same thing, which is for instance holding a bottle because that's, you can think about both hands against the bottle, whether you're tilting your head back or not. It's bilateral. So both, both hands are doing exactly the same—bilateral symmetrical. And then you have to do something called bilateral reciprocal, which is where…Or asymmetrical first and then reciprocal. So bilateral asymmetrical is hold the bucket, take out the egg, so think about it like that's incredible; the brain has to now do two different things with opposite sides of the body. I mean, if I say to you, do that whole kind of wrap your tummy, pat your head, it's really, really hard. And that is something where you are two different sides of the brain have to give different signals to the different sides of your body. Now, I know that holding a jar and screwing a lid is so simple for you now as an adult or even as a child, it's a simple thing. But to go back to six months, that's a hugely complicated thing, it's like rubbing your tummy and stroking your head or whatever it is, you know. So, it really is, what he's working on is massive.

And then the next step, because that comes after the symmetrical bilateral and after the asymmetrical bilateral comes the reciprocal bilateral, which is each side has to do exactly the opposite of the other side. Now if you picture each side going opposite direction, you've got crawling. And so crawling is a bilateral reciprocal motion and that's like really high coordination because in the middle of your brain you have this little bridge called the corpus callosum and he's got to go across and kind of link the left and right sides of the brain, and those messages have to go very quickly across from one side to the other when you're crawling. So, when you say what is working on, oh my word, he is a little scientist, he’s working on so much at the moment.

**Cass:** No, and I have to say that was more nerves than anything else.

**Meg:** Well, let me tell you that when crawling comes, those nerves will be founded because…

**Cass:** That is what I'm nervous about.

**Meg:** Yes.

**Cass:** It is starting to show. And he does move, I mean I put him down on his play mat on his back the other day and because Alex was away over the weekend, which was the first weekend I'd done solely by myself for two nights with Max. Luckily, I was really lucky. He was wonderful, we had so much fun. But, I sent Alex a photo because he was right across the other side of the room on his tummy looking at something, facing the…And he just, he's moving around because he hasn't got the crawling, it's all rolling and that's the bums going in the air and the legs are going underneath. So he's definitely…

**Meg:** Going to get there.

**Cass:** Yeah.

**Meg:** It would be very, very unusual if he crawl at six months. In fact, in all my years of working, I've never heard of a baby crawling six months. You know, if he crawls by eight months, he's really, really on target, if he crawls before eight months that would be ahead of the curve. So, yeah, and don't wish for it because once it comes…

**Cass:** No, no…

**Meg:** Busy.

**Cass:** No, because I know also on the milestones, in fact he's kind of on…He's hit all of the ones that were from I think 21 weeks to another. The only one that isn't ticked yet is the babbling, But I think I'm starting to hear a bit of babbling particularly first thing in the morning, so I'm really excited as that sort of starts to come.

**Meg:** That’s amazing. So you're talking…So just for mom's references, if you go onto the pink section of your Parents Sense App, mums, you'll see there is a little flag that says Charlie's milestones. Well, in this case my baby's called Charlie, I know that yours will say Max's milestones. So at this age, babbling is 21 to 30 weeks, which he hasn't done yet. Rolling to the side also 21 to 30 weeks, which he's done, sitting 21 to 30 weeks, which he has done, well done, and he did that at 24 weeks, I think. 23 weeks?

**Cass:** Yeah, I think he’s…

**Meg:** Yeah, and in reaching and grabbing he's definitely doing that. And yeah, so then so he's just got babbling to go, so that's interesting.

**Cass:** Yeah, and actually there was one on there that I was going to ask you about, which was weight on legs. I'm assuming that's without, because I can hold him under his arms and sort of, he puts quite a lot of weight on his legs but he's not doing that independently. Is that weight on legs independently?

**Meg:** No, that's not independent, so you can tick that one off as well. Well, so what's quite interesting about that one…

**Cass:** That's very early, then.

**Meg:** Well, babies actually, it's quite an interesting milestone because babies actually do that immediately, quite soon after birth, in fact, but it's really…And then it disappears for a while where they actually don't really take weight on their legs. They kind of, their legs are much softer and then it's very variable. And actually when I look at the milestone range, therefore for that one it's actually quite late. It's 13 one weeks, which would only be really close to six and a half, seven, seven months in fact. So yeah, I mean he could definitely be doing that now and I must maybe widen that range a little bit, but yeah, it's taking weight when you hold him under his arms, he's actually standing on his legs. And what he'll also start to do is you'll start to actually bounce like that and be interested in dancing.

**Cass:** Well, he also sometimes looks like he's trying to run really fast because you get one leg goes up and down, they go up and down, the legs never stop sort of moving at pace. It's very funny.

**Meg:** Busy boy.

**Cass:** And actually I suppose I'm very, he's not quite properly self-feeding. I can see self-feeding there, but he probably…

**Meg:** Self-feeding is also 31 to 39 and then letting go, as I mentioned, there's also 31 to 39 weeks, so that'll also come up fairly soon.

**Cass:** One of the challenges we spoke about last week, which I just thought I'd give a quick update on, was his feeding with solids. We were having a bit of a challenge and I mean if I didn't know better, I'd think that he listens to these and then just wait to talk about it and then sorts it out, because almost immediately things changed. But I really focused on the self-feeding and he…And I also completely removed the time pressure because initially I knew I was trying to do three meals a day, but I was doing them I think a little bit close to his milk-feed, so the previous milk-feed. So, I decided to actually leave a bigger space and almost do it in directly in between the two milk-feeds.

**Meg:** Correct.

**Cass:** Because he's never been a great feeder anyway. So I felt he was twofold, and the other thing I started doing is there's these things called melty sticks, which just dissolve basically, and I was giving him a very small one of those dipped in whatever puree I'd made just to introduce the…and then he would put in, that idea.

**Meg:** Oh, that's a great idea.

**Cass:** Well, it meant that then when the spoon went in, he already had that taste. So he wasn't sort of like, oh my god, what's that? What's going on? And since then, he's honestly loving his solids. He's been doing three meals a day and it's been so much fun to feed him. He's picking things up and putting them in his mouth and he loved…Watermelon the other day was something I introduced, which he just thought was the best thing ever, of course, and he's had such a variety of different things and just responding so well. But nearly always, I have to hover the spoon in front of him, and then he will take the spoon and he'll feed it and then I'll put more puree on, hover it, he takes it and he feeds himself. He's an independent soul

**Meg:** He is, he certainly is.

**Interlude**
If you enjoy my podcast, I would like to share one of my favorite podcasts with you, the Honest Hour. Christine Masureik is mom to two boys and a third little boy on the way. She's an American expat living in Cape Town, South Africa since 2008 and decided to start sharing her experiences in parenting since 2017. Having grown up in a dysfunctional family environment in her own childhood, which led to her adoption at the age of 10. Christina is passionate about finding purpose and presence in parenting as well as exploring our own opportunity for healing and personal growth as we navigate the world of parenting our own children. Christina believes in ending the trauma cycle and that in parenting our own children we can learn how to re-parent ourselves. So, pop on over to Christina's podcast the Honest Hour,

**Meg:** But actually, I'm glad that you mentioned that. Putting the food immediate…Directly in the middle of two milk-feeds because that's exactly what you should do at this age. So it's six months, you should, and it does effectively mean that you're feeding actually pretty much two hourly. So, I know that he does an actual 6:00AM milk but it would be 6, 8, 10, 12, 2 and 6, like literally it's you are feeding every two hours but it is slap bang in the middle of when the milk is the correct thing that for this age.

**Cass:** And what that's actually done is push out so that night feed that was at around one-two is now at about three or four, which of course is playing a little bit of havoc again with that morning feed because now we're so much closer.

**Meg:** So, and what I would do there Cass, and that's absolutely perfect. He's doing this all spot on. Is he on full protein? So he's having eggs, fish, meat, chicken?

**Cass:** Yeah, and we've done all allergens.

**Meg:** Brilliant. So you must, that's brilliant. So now that he's having that, that night feed is actually going to start to fall away. And by the way, on the days that he does 4:00 AM that is considered a morning feed because that's actually a full night, so he's actually sleeping through when he does that. But what you can now start to do is you can start for that 4:00 AM feed is just giving half a bottle, not the full bottle and then another half at six. So what you would've done then is reduced his milk to actually four milk feeds effectively, because you'll have a split one at four and six in the morning and then your 10, 2, 6 in the evening or whatever it is. So you do four-hourly through the day, which will move him onto four milk feeds, which is the appropriate amount of milk for six months old. And then what he'll do is he'll actually eat his solids even better because he's not getting as many calories in milk and sleep better as well. So you can start maybe tonight, don't do half, maybe do three quarters at 4:00 AM and then take it down to half eventually and then he will actually want his milk then at six in the morning or seven.

**Cass:** Okay, yeah. I mean the clock's changed on the weekend as well; we weren't now four, and it's completely thrown because he's now having such a lion, of course, which throws our morning because I've always counted on that extra hour to get things done.

**Meg:** And now, you don’t know.

**Cass:** And now this morning he didn't wake up until 20 past 7 and I had a meeting at 9:30 and I was like, got so much to do before I get…

**Meg:** That's so interesting. I never thought of that, because the app doesn't let you, at the moment, the app doesn't let you register a morning waking later than seven because it's better to keep their morning awake-time between five and seven. So that's probably something that we need to adjust in the app for when there's a time change.

**Cass:** Yeah, I mean I'm sure he's going…Because he was waking up at 5:30, then he's sleeping an extra hour and then the clocks have gone forward so suddenly there's an extra two hours going on.

**Meg:** Listen, you're going to be making a whole lot of moms feel very jealous right now.

**Cass:** He would change. It would change

**Meg:** Exactly, he would change. Anyway, but Cass, it's been wonderful connecting again with your six month old. Congratulations.

**Cass:** Thank you.

**Meg:** You've made a big milestone and he's doing so well.

**Cass:** Yeah, he is. He's having a great week. So, but every week's different, so…

**Meg:** Yep. Lovely.

**Cass:** Thanks so much, Meg.

**Meg:** Thank you, Cass

**Cass:** You too, bye.

**Outro**
Thanks to everyone who joined us, we will see you the same time next week. Until then, download Parent Sense App, and take the guesswork out of parenting.