

We encourage you to participate in caring for your baby. During cares, watch how your baby moves and acts so that you can recognise when your baby appears secure and calm and when your baby needs a rest. These are your infant's unique behaviour cues.

Touching and holding

- Prepare your baby for touch with a speaking in a soft voice and place your hands on baby.
- Hold your baby in such a way that supports their arms and legs tucked close to their body and hands close to their face.
- Your baby can now tolerate touch in a variety of ways, including gentle steady pressure, or rhythmic stroking.
- When holding your baby while they are in a deep sleep or awake, talk or sing to them in a soft voice.
- When moving your hands away from your baby, do so gently and slowly without abrupt movements.
- Kangaroo care—holding your baby next to your chest skin to skin—is recommended. Your baby's nurse will help you with this.

Feeding

At this stage your baby will wake to let you know he/she is hungry. Your baby's sucking, swallowing and breathing is generally coordinated. Babies will often suck on their fingers when hungry. From around 38 weeks, your baby may begin to accept your social interaction (talking, smiling, and singing) during feeding time.

- The environment around your baby should be calm and as quiet as possible during feeds.
- If your baby is fed by a tube, provide a pacifier during feeds, as tolerated (if consented to).
- Breastfeeding is encouraged as soon as baby is ready to attempt it.
- Reduce care procedures and activity around your baby prior to and during breastfeeds to save their energy for feeding. Consider doing cares before or half way through oral feeding.
- Provide an opportunity for your baby to smell milk before beginning breastfeeds.
- During feeding, your baby may want to suck for a while, then look and listen for a period of time.
- Burp your baby as needed, doing so gently with sitting up or putting baby over your shoulder and gentle patting on their back (if necessary)

Sleeping

- Your baby should sleep on their back.
- Newborn babies can sleep about 16-18hrs of the day and is important for brain development.
- If you need to wake your baby before care giving procedures, do so by gently placing your hands around them.
- Provide care giving and social interaction when your baby is awake.
- Be aware that your baby may only want to be awake for a short time before needing sleep.

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Positioning

Your baby has the ability to keep his/her arms close to their body in a tucked position most of the time and also be able to show a wide variety of movements. Sometime your baby may be awake even though their eyes are closed, and vice versa; asleep with eyes open.

- Support your baby's position with their arms, hands and legs close to their body.
- Repositioning should be performed with slow gentle movements and without sudden changes.
- Aim to position your baby's to maintain a snuggled position and facilitate emerging development of extension and flexion of legs. Boundaries around your baby continue to provide support and facilitate a flexed posture of the baby and limb with the head in midline.

Looking, listening and smelling

Your baby may show periods of being awake, alert and socially interactive. They will be able to look at items approximately 10-12 inches away. Babies at this age will show interest in faces and exploring the environment. Your baby will generally accept one type of stimulation at a time, such as looking or listening. Maintain quiet background noise and voice.

- Shield your baby's eyes from all bright or direct light.
- Shading your baby's eyes or keeping a dim light will make it easier for them to look.
- Provide opportunities for your baby to look at your face and their environment.
- Develop a regular pattern of care e.g. feeding, nappy change, interaction, sleep.

- You may need to look away when baby needs to rest/sleep.
- Talk, read or sing to your baby.
- Observe your baby's behavioural cues that may indicate when he/she needs to rest. Your baby may still tire quickly with handling and stimulation. Aim to respond to cues in a timely way.

Nappy changing

- Provide support around your baby during nappy changes.

Bathing

- May be performed by nurses and parents together until parents feel comfortable bathing independently.
- Bathing your baby should be carefully considered and performed only when it provides obvious benefits.
- Provide containment to your baby's arms and legs during a bath to keep your baby calm, by swaddling with a cloth over baby's body.

If you have any further questions or concerns about the care of your baby, please talk to the nurse and medical team caring for your baby.

**NICU Direct Dial Number:
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