

This information is to help you understand more about your 29 - 32 week premature baby, and help you become more involved in your baby's care and the continuing development of their brain.

Touching and holding

Prepare your baby for touch by speaking in a soft and soothing voice, slowly add touch if tolerated by your baby.

Touch your baby using continuous gentle pressure on their legs, upper body or head and avoid stroking, rubbing or poking.

Hold your baby still, rather than rocking, as your baby cannot tolerate a rocking motion at this age.

When moving your hands away from your baby, do so gently and slowly without abrupt movements.

Kangaroo Care: also known as skin to skin holding your baby next to your chest is recommended at this age.

Your baby's nurse will advise when this is possible.

Feeding

In order to feed from the breast or bottle, your baby needs to learn to suck, swallow and breathe during feeds. At this age your baby's pattern of sucking, swallowing and breathing is uncoordinated. Breast milk or formula may be given via a feeding tube that has been inserted via your baby's nose or mouth. Your baby may be receiving nutrition via a long line. With the support of the nurse, small amounts of breast milk can be given via syringe or cotton tip into the mouth to help build healthy bacteria.

Your baby may suck on a pacifier (if you consented). A pacifier provides the opportunity for non-nutritive sucking: that

is, sucking that babies naturally do (in utero) when there is no milk to swallow. This will only be for very short periods of time and your baby will likely need help keeping the pacifier in their mouth. Non-nutritive sucking assists your baby in staying calm.

Hold your baby during tube feeds.

You should begin expressing breast milk for your baby as soon as possible.

Sleeping

Sleep is good and is important for your baby's brain. When they sleep their brain can grow and develop. It allows the important pathways needed for a healthy future to develop. If over-handled or over-stimulated your baby will become deprived of sleep. This can affect the development of the brain.

When your baby is asleep, try not to wake them with touch.

Support periods of rest so that your baby can conserve energy.

Before initiating cares, spend time with your infant to know when they're starting to wake or show signs they are ready to be handled. If this isn't possible wake your baby slowly by gently placing your hands on them.

Positioning

Infants need support to position their arms and legs close to their body. This supports normal motor development. You may notice your baby stretch, tremor or startle.

Your baby should generally have their hands close to their face and legs tucked close to their body.

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Repositioning should be performed with slow gentle movements and without sudden changes.

Have boundaries around your baby to maintain a snuggled position and facilitate emerging development of extension and flexion of legs.

Looking, listening and smelling

Your baby will be able to open their eyes for short periods but cannot regulate or manage light. Your baby may look at faces briefly. He/she generally prefers soft voices as compared to other sounds.

Shield your baby's eyes from bright or direct light.

Avoid loud sounds around your baby's space.

Encouraging your baby to look at your face.

Use a soft and quiet voice when talking to your baby.

Protect your baby from strong odours such as perfume, cigarette smoke, aftershave, scented lotions and hand sanitisers.

Skin cares and nappy changing

Provide boundaries around your baby to keep care time from being stressful. You can use containment with hands or linen to help.

Move slowly and gently while changing nappies. Rotate trunk with flexed knees and hips from side to side. Avoid lifting legs high in the air. If your baby is showing signs of stress, allow time for your baby to reorganise themselves.

Bathing

May be performed by nurses and parents together. Your baby should receive normal baths and/or sponge bathing of

soiled areas, only as needed. Swaddle bathing allows your baby to feel safe and secure. Provide containment to your baby's arms and legs during a bath to keep your baby calm.

How to know that your baby is unhappy and a little stressed:

- Arms and legs may be stiffly spread out
- Baby may hiccup more frequently
- Fingers may be spread open (splayed)
- May turn away from you (usually this means baby needs to rest and save energy)

How to know that I am happy and stable:

- Colour is healthy and pink
- Baby looks comfortably positioned and flexed
- Wakes slowly and can focus my attention on your voice
- Baby may suck on a pacifier

If you have further questions or concerns regarding the care of your baby please talk to the nurse or medial team caring for your baby.

**NICU Direct Dial Number:
04 806 0800**