

# Your Preterm Baby Comes Home

## What is a preterm baby?

- a baby who is born more than three weeks early is a preterm baby

## Important things to remember:

- Corrected age: It is important to count your baby's age from the date your baby should have been born. This is called the corrected age of your baby.
- Infection prevention: Always wash your hands before feeding and touching your baby, after you change the diaper and especially when you are sick.

## Preterm babies are different from other babies because they have:

- different needs depending on how early they were born, or how sick they were
- a central nervous system that needs more time to develop (immature)
- a need to catch up on their growth

## Preterm babies have a difficult time with too much noise and stimulation. It is important to:

- learn what your baby wants
- learn how to talk with your baby
- learn how to carry and hold your baby to help your baby be calm (quiet)

It may be hard in the beginning to know what your baby wants. Is your baby hungry? Is your baby tired? Has your baby had too much noise?

## In the first few weeks and months at home, because your baby gets upset and tired easily, it is important to:

- have only a few people around your baby at one time
- hold, rock and wrap your baby if crying or fussy
- keep your baby in a curled up position (flexed)
- let your baby suck on hands and fingers or give a soother
- be still and quiet with your baby
- turn down the lights around your baby
- pick up your baby when your baby cries
- talk and play with your baby when your baby is happy and calm

## Feeding

Preterm babies need to be:

- fed in a quiet room, with little light
- held close to your chest when feeding, with their hands near their mouth
- breastfed at least every 2-3 hours (some babies may need formula)

Do not give cereal until your baby is at least 6 months old (from the day the baby should have been born).

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Your preterm baby may:

- be a slow feeder
- get tired out when feeding
- fall asleep during the feeding

### **Sleeping, waking and crying**

Your baby may:

- be restless and noisy when sleeping
- grunt and groan when sleeping
- sleep a lot more in the beginning
- be fussy when awake and cry more
- be very difficult to calm down

Your baby may cry because of:

- hunger, tiredness, loneliness, or a need to be held or a need to be moved
- too much activity and noise (over stimulated)

**Preterm babies are very sensitive to noise and stimulation.**

**When your baby is tired and does not want to play with you, your baby may:**

- turn away from you and may stretch arms and hands
- cry and become fussy
- startle
- frown, yawn, sneeze, and stick out the tongue
- spit up
- breathe faster than usual
- push away from you, arching the back, neck and head

**Call your family doctor if your baby:**

- becomes pale or blue (cyanosed)
- has problems with breathing or there is a change in how they breathe
- does not stop crying
- does not want to eat
- has problems with eating
- does not have at least 6 wet diapers each day
- is vomiting and has watery bowel movements
- is difficult to wake up
- is weak and very tired
- feels hot

**To prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) your baby:**

- must be kept away from cigarette smoke
- **must always** go to sleep on the back, (but should be put on tummy to play)

