

Your Baby's Development



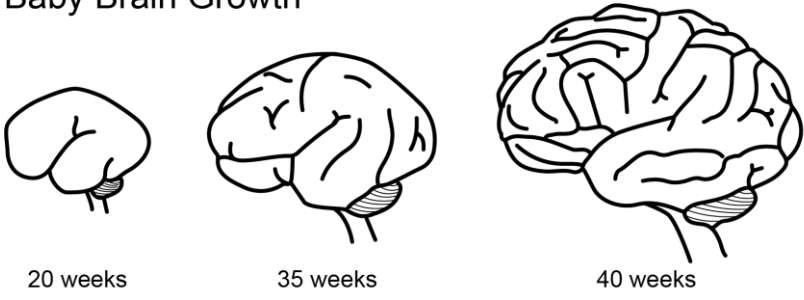
**Physiotherapy
Occupational Therapy**



Brain and Nervous System Development

A baby's brain normally increases in size about 50% between 34 and 40 weeks of pregnancy (gestational age).

Baby Brain Growth



This growth does not stop when a baby is born early.

Because the brain is still growing and developing, a baby is likely to have:

- a greater need for sleep and need to be woken up to feed
- trouble keeping body temperature in the normal range
- a greater chance of getting a yellowing of the skin called 'jaundice' (say *jarw-n-dih-s*)
- problems breathing
- trouble coordinating sucking, swallowing, and breathing when feeding
- weakened muscles making it harder for the baby to hold their body in good positions for breathing and feeding

Words Explained

Here are some words you are going to hear about your baby that are related to your baby's development.

Gestational Age

Gestational (say *jes-tay-shun-al*) age is a common term used during pregnancy to describe how far along a pregnancy is.

We measure gestational age in weeks, from the first day of a pregnant person's last menstrual cycle to the current date.

We consider any baby born before 37 weeks to be 'preterm' or 'premature'.

Corrected Age

When a baby is born premature, we use something called corrected age. This helps everyone know where your baby should be with their behaviours and development, because it might be different than a baby born at full term.

To calculate the corrected age, we begin with your baby's actual age in weeks (number of weeks since the date of birth). We then subtract the number of weeks your baby was born early. This is your baby's corrected age.

40 weeks = a full term pregnancy

Corrected Age Example

If a baby is born at 32 weeks, it means the baby was born 8 weeks early. If it is now 12 weeks since the baby was born, the corrected age would be 4 weeks old (one month).

<i>actual age</i>	12 weeks old
<u><i>minus weeks preterm</i></u>	<u>- 8 weeks (40-32=8)</u>
<i>equals corrected age</i>	= 4 weeks old

This baby should be behaving and doing activities of a one month old baby.

Developmental Milestones

These are skills gained by most children at a certain age. For example, most babies smile by 6 weeks corrected age.

Remember these milestones are only used as a guide. Every baby develops differently.

When looking at your baby's developmental milestones, always use your baby's corrected age until your baby is 2 years old.

Therapy while in the hospital

A physiotherapist and/or occupational therapist might be involved in your baby's care.

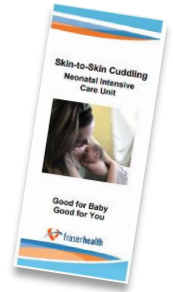
Examples of when a therapist might be involved:

- feeding concerns
- checking on development and developmental milestones
- positioning
- shaping of the head
- referring to community services when baby goes home

How to Help Your Baby Grow and Develop

Your baby needs you now more than ever. You are the most important person to your baby:

- Hold your baby 'skin-to-skin'. This is where you hold your baby with his or her clothing removed against your bare skin (To learn more, see the pamphlet on '*Skin-to-Skin Cuddling*').
- Keep the noise and lighting low around your baby's bed. Remember to talk softly and turn off the ringer on your phone when in your baby's room.
- When holding your baby, try to support their legs and arms so that they are gently flexed in towards the middle of their body.



Watch your baby for **signs of stress**:

- arm or leg straightening
- finger or toe spreading
- twitches or startles
- back arching
- facial grimace or scowl
- quick color changes
- irregular breathing
- crying



Baby in stress

If your baby shows signs of stress, cuddle your baby or give them hand hugs and talk to them quietly.

Watch for **signs of being relaxed or quietly awake:**

- arm or leg bending
- relaxed fingers and toes
- smooth movements
- rounded, bent forward body
- relaxed face and mouth
- normal color
- regular breathing
- eyes open and looking at you



Baby relaxed

When your baby is relaxed and quietly awake, this is a good time to talk, sing, and play with your baby.

Learning to care for your baby

We have parent education classes to help you prepare you to care for your baby at home. Ask your therapist about what is available.

When You Go Home

- Follow safe sleep guidelines for your baby. See the booklet on safe sleep in your hospital package or go to [HealthLinkBC.ca](https://www.healthlinkbc.ca) and search “safer sleep” or scan this QR code.



- Arrange to have your baby’s developmental milestones checked regularly by your family doctor, baby doctor (pediatrician), or nurse practitioner.
- We might ask an ‘infant development’ program near you to see your baby.

If we did not ask the program to see your baby and you have concerns about your baby’s development, contact the infant developmental program in your city. They will check your baby’s development.

- Protect your baby from infections, particularly lung infections.
 - Keep your baby’s immunizations up to date.
 - Avoid crowds and contact with sick people.
 - Clean your hands often.
- When awake:
 - Lay your baby on his or her tummy several times a day. We call this ‘tummy time’.
 - Spend time playing with your baby.
 - Bring your baby’s hands together and put them to their mouth.
 - Help your baby focus his or her eyes by looking at your baby, talking to your baby, and moving around so you baby follows your face.



Resources

Tummy Time

On Fraser Health's Patient Education Catalogue (patienteduc.fraserhealth.ca), search "tummy time". Available in a number of languages.



Baby's Best Chance:

Parent's Handbook of Pregnancy and Baby Care

(healthlinkbc.ca/pregnancy-parenting/babys-best-chance) Available in a number of languages.



Infant Development Program

Aboriginal Infant Development Program

These programs offer services in the home to infants and young children up to 3 years of age who are at risk for or who already have a delay in their development.

Consultants help families learn ways to promote child development and manage developmental challenges. Consultants help families connect with activities and resources in the community.

To find a program in your area, ask your public health nurse, your doctor, or search online with "infant development" or "aboriginal infant development" and your city.

It's good to ask

If you have any questions, contact your physiotherapist or occupational therapist.

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This information does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.

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To order: patienteduc.fraserhealth.ca