

Resources

Baby's Best Chance

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Parents' Handbook of Pregnancy and Baby Care



Available at:

- Your doctor's office
- Your local community health centre
- Online at www.bestchance.gov.bc.ca

Infant Development Program

On the internet, search 'infant development program' and your city name for a program near you.

It's good to ask

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

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www.fraserhealth.ca

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

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To order: patienteduc.fraserhealth.ca

Your Baby's Development in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)



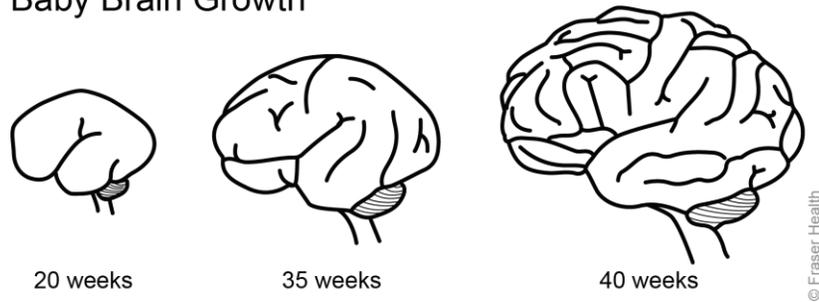
Physiotherapy
Occupational Therapy



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 these challenges:

- 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' (sounds like 'jaw-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

When You Go Home

- Follow the guidelines for safe sleep guidelines for your baby. See the booklet on safe sleep in your NICU package or go to www.FraserHealth.ca and search 'safe sleep'. 
- Arrange to have your baby's developmental milestones checked regularly by your family doctor, baby doctor (pediatrician), or nurse practitioner.
- We might ask for your baby to be seen by an 'infant development' program near you.

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 community. They will check your baby.
- 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'. To learn more, see Baby's Best Chance. 
 - 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.

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

Therapy while in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

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

Examples of when a therapist is involved:

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

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.

Words Explained

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

Gestational Age: The time from the first day of the mom's last menstrual cycle to her baby's date of birth.

This is measured in weeks during the pregnancy. It describes how far along the pregnancy is at any time. Any baby born before 37 weeks is considered 'preterm' or 'premature'. When born early, we refer to the gestational age as the baby's age.

Corrected Age: The corrected age helps everyone know where your baby should be when you look at behaviours and activities (called baby's development).

To calculate, take baby's actual age in weeks (number of weeks since birth). Subtract the number of weeks the baby was early. This is your baby's corrected age.

40 weeks
Usual length of a pregnancy

Corrected Age Example: If a baby is born at 32 weeks (gestational age), it means the baby was born 8 weeks early. If it is now 3 months (12 weeks) since the baby was born, the corrected age would be 4 weeks old (one month).

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

This baby should be behaving and doing activities of a 1 month old baby.

Developmental Milestones: A skill gained by most children at a certain age. For example, most babies smile by 6 weeks of 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.

How to Help Your Baby Grow and Develop

Your baby needs your help to grow and develop:

- 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').
- Protect your baby from being overstimulated or stressed, for example, by keeping the noise and lighting low. Your nurse will help you discover what might be stressing your baby.
- Give your baby extra support in different positions if they have weak muscles and cannot support themselves (such as when feeding).

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