

Things to Consider for Home

It can be a relief to be away from the doctors, nurses, and monitors, but it can also be a source of stress. On one hand, you have time together in the privacy of your home. On the other hand, some parents will have anxiety about not having the professional care as readily available, and not having the monitors as warning signals.

Like other big life changes, there will be an adjustment period, which may last 1 to 2 months. Your baby will be changing a lot and you will be getting used to each other at home as you develop routines together.

Having mixed feelings about this transition to home is normal.

- What has it been like for you, having the baby at home or thinking about having the baby at home?
- What are some of the thoughts and feelings you are having?

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

- **You do know your baby very well** and you can trust your ability to notice physical and developmental changes that you may want to discuss with the pediatrician.
- **It is important that you plan time for yourself to rest;** babies can sense when their parents are stressed. It is OKAY for you to take time for yourself, and to have help taking care of your baby so that you can take care of yourself.
- **Preterm infants develop in the same fashion that full term babies do, perhaps just at a slower rate.** It is important to use their Corrected Age when thinking about their developmental milestones.
- **It can be stressful knowing that preterm infants may develop more slowly than full term babies,** or may have difficulties with their development. Not knowing for sure how your baby will develop in the future can be unsettling. Therefore, just being with your baby NOW -- observing, interacting and loving -- is the most important thing you can do. You will also have the help of your pediatrician and the High Risk Infant Follow-up (HRIF) Clinic (if your baby was referred to this clinic) to monitor your baby's progress over time.
- **Keep in mind that it may take time for your baby to breast feed well if he/she has mostly been getting bottle fed at the hospital.** Consider talking to your pediatrician about getting a lactation consultation if you have any questions or concerns about breast feeding.

REMINDER: All babies born under 32 weeks, and those with certain other medical conditions, are seen in the HRIF Clinic at roughly 4 months Corrected Age.

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Interacting With Your Baby

- **Keep in mind that preemies who are now term or post term still may get overstimulated** more easily in response to noise, light, touch, or movement than babies born at term. So for best interactions, try to be mindful of the amount of stimulation your baby is receiving.
- **Preterm babies can be more irritable and fussy than full term babies**, and they can have more gas and digestive difficulties.
- **Preterm babies may also spend less time in alert states than babies born at full term.** They may be less visually responsive and engaged – for example, not focusing their gaze on you as consistently.
- **The more you can recognize the variability in your baby's alert states and level of comfort**, the more easily your baby will benefit from positive interactions with you.

Do you feel like you have a good sense of when your baby gets overstimulated?

- We urge you to keep up with your baby's immunizations in their first months and years of life
- Your doctors and nurses will help you arrange appointments for these "baby shots" that will keep babies protected from many illnesses that affect young children.