

It takes some time to learn to communicate with your baby. At times you may get a combination of both sets of cues (especially if baby is unsure of what is to happen) so look for the most prominent cue.

If your baby starts to show avoidance cues whilst handling, give them time out using the containment hold and then watch them. If your baby settles you may be able to continue. Otherwise it might be time to stop. There are times when it is not practical to stop and handling needs to continue, but be aware that your baby is giving stress cues and provide comfort during and after handling.

During this time your baby will feel most supported in a curled up posture. Encourage nestling by swaddling with your baby's hands by their face and legs curled up.

Your baby's head is very mouldable. Time on their tummy when awake and on either side will ensure an even development of their head shape.

Rolling your baby onto their side to pick up and put down will decrease their startle reflex—where their arms go outwards—and will also help to strengthen their neck muscles.



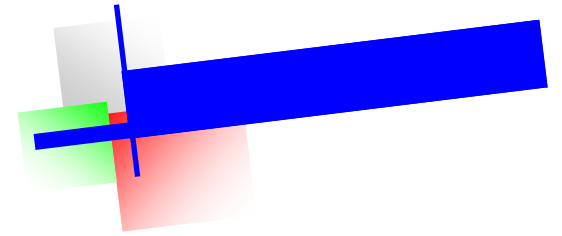
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HANDLING HINTS FOR PARENTS AND CARERS OF PRETERM INFANTS



This information will help babies who are:

1. Nursed in a humidicrib/ isolette or open cot
2. Not ventilated
3. Not under phototherapy/ lights
4. Medically stable

POSITIONING:

- *Allows different body parts to bear weight
- *Lessens the chance of tight or weak hip, knee, ankle, shoulder and back muscles
- *Encourages your baby to know that they have two sides of their body that move together and separately.
- *Allows even development of head shape
- *Provides support and containment



CONTACT TIME:

Kangaroo care: This is a skin to skin cuddle with your baby. Baby is stripped down to a nappy and you change into a hospital gown to allow baby to lie on your chest. These cuddles can be quite lengthy and research shows many benefits for the parents and babies.



Nursing staff will assist you with kangaroo cuddles once your baby is medically stable.

Containment holds: Premature infants prefer a firmer touch or hold, rather than a light stroke. Placing one hand over their head and upper back and the other hand over the buttocks and holding is a nice way to do this. If your baby is upset this is a helpful way of soothing as well. This can be easily done when your baby is in a humidicrib.

Finger holding: Your baby can grasp your finger soon after birth. Giving your baby a finger to hold can be comforting to them.

Care times: Helping with your baby's cares is a good time to spend with your baby. You may use a peanut pillow to keep your baby's head in the middle.

READING YOUR BABY'S CUES:

The development of your baby's behaviour is an integral part of their overall development.

This involves being able to receive and cope with all the sensory information that is now part of their world. It also involves their ability to manage their sleep/wake states.

You baby will let you know when they are ready to participate in activities and when they have reached their threshold and need some 'time out' or help from you to feel comfortable and secure again. The following are cues that include your baby's unique way of talking to you.

Willingness Cues:

Eye contact
Stilling (stops moving)
Turning eyes or head towards you
Eyes wide and bright
Hand to mouth



Avoidance Cues:

Yawning, hiccoughing, spitting up
Avoids eye contact
Extending arms in front with fingers splayed
Irritability or fussiness
Uncontrolled, jerky movements
Staring or 'glassy eyed'
Pale or mottled colour

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