

# BABY BYTES

For families with infants and young children

## Caring for Your Premature Baby

Enjoy the newest member of your family! Babies are wonderful, exciting and fascinating ask any new Mother or Father. They'll tell you how they can watch their baby for hours:

- Holding their hand
- Kissing their feet
- Smelling their newly washed hair

Make sure you take time to just hold, play and stroke your baby. Get to know their likes and dislikes. Watch their unique personality emerge. Delight in your baby's new accomplishments.



## YOUR BABY'S DEVELOPMENT

Babies who are born prematurely often have two ages:

- Their chronological age is the age of the baby from the day of birth - the number of days, weeks or years old the baby is.
- Their corrected or adjusted age is the age of the baby based on their due date. Health care providers may use this age when they evaluate the baby's growth and development. So, if your baby is 6 months old, but was born two months early, their corrected age is 4 months.
- This is important to remember because your baby may be developing skills based on their "corrected" age rather than their actual (chronological) age for the first one to two years.
- No two babies are exactly the same. Babies grow in a fairly predictable pattern but the timing of developing skills can vary widely between children. There is research to indicate that babies born prematurely are at a higher risk of being delayed in areas of development.

Your baby will develop and change almost daily. You can provide stimulation to promote your baby's skills.

- Your baby may enjoy rocking and bundling
- Talk and sing to your baby - face to face
- Tell stories or read to your baby
- Massage your baby's skin - use gentle, firm touch
- Try kangarooing (which is placing your baby on your chest, skin to skin)



## Remember...“You are your Baby’s Favourite Toy”

### PLAYING WITH YOUR BABY

#### Positioning Tips for Play

Your baby needs to be placed in a variety of different positions to grow and learn. Supervision is an important step in keeping your baby safe during play.

**On Back:** When your baby is on his back, safely place mirrors and hanging items over your baby within his reach and his view. Your baby will also enjoy seeing your smiling face!

**In Side Lying:** Place your baby on his side with a small roll at his back. Place light toys within reach. Lie beside him and talk or sing to him. Try changing sides each time you do this.

**On Tummy:** Provide supervised tummy time activities. Place your baby on his tummy with his head turned to the side. Place colourful toys and mirrors within his reach. Tummy time can also occur with your baby on your chest, this is a nice position to talk and sing to your baby and encourage some face-to-face play.

Your baby will give you signs when they are ready to play and interact.

- Quiet and Alert
- Relaxed
- Arms and Legs at ease
- Hands to Mouth
- Smiling and Cooing

Your baby will also give you signs when they are NOT ready for play.

- Looking Away
- Stretching out Stiffly
- Yawning
- Hiccups or Spitting up
- Crying



These signs may mean your baby needs a break, is sleepy, irritable, and needs your help to settle. You can help your baby settle by bundling and holding, rocking them gently in your arms, offering something for them to suckle on, play quiet music or use gentle patting on his back or bottom

#### Take time to Enjoy and Get to Know Your Baby!

Learn to pace yourself, take one step at a time. Try to get lots of rest, eat well, reach out, phone a friend and take a break when you can.

For more information on parenting contact:

Health Connection at 705-721-7520 [www.simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org)

Early ON Centres [www.ontario.ca/earlyon](http://www.ontario.ca/earlyon)

The Simcoe County Infant and Child Development Program [www.empowersimcoe.ca/infant-development](http://www.empowersimcoe.ca/infant-development)