

For those who have had a baby in week 35 or 36 of pregnancy

Babies born in weeks 35 and 36 are slightly premature. As such, they have special needs that are good for you to know about as a parent.

Breastfeeding and feeding

Children who are born slightly premature need to eat often. For the first 24 hours, they need food every two hours. The best food for your baby is breast milk, and the second best is formula.

You may need to wake your baby up in the beginning to encourage it to breastfeed. If your baby doesn't want to suckle, or if it sucks for a short time and then falls asleep, you can hand express some colostrum into a spoon or a cup and feed them that way. They often take longer to suckle, and they pause more often compared to babies born at full term. If your baby sucks for a short time and still needs more food, you can compress (squeeze your whole breast) when your baby sucks. By doing this, your baby will get more milk from your breast. You can ask staff to show you how to do this.

If it is difficult to express breast milk and your baby is unable to suckle from your breast, formula can be given in the meantime until your milk starts coming in. Formula can be given through a tube on the breast during breastfeeding, in a cup or through a tube in the stomach.

As time goes on, your baby will suck more and more and it will wake up and show that it is hungry. When breastfeeding, you may hear your baby swallowing more frequently.

Important to think about when breastfeeding

- Your baby's head should be slightly tilted back to help their breathing
- Your baby's whole body should be properly supported in your arms

Breast milk is the best food for newborn babies, and it is particularly important for premature babies because:

- It reduces the risk of infections
- It is easily digested and absorbed in the gut
- It is laxative
- It contains growth factors for areas such as the gut and the brain

Temperature

The best way to care for your baby in the early days is through skin-to-skin contact with you or your partner. Holding your baby skin-to-skin helps keep them warm, calm, and encourages them to suckle more often. It also helps them conserve energy. An easy way to carry your baby is by using a baby sling or a "kangaroo shirt". The maternity ward staff can show you how to use these. You can borrow a kangaroo shirt from the maternity ward or buy one from the hospital pharmacy. Your baby's temperature is taken

several times a day for the first few days.

Sleep

Premature babies are more tired and sleep a lot more than full-term babies. They do not always show hunger as clearly, and they tend to fall asleep easier during breastfeeding. However, they are usually awake a few times a day. It is important to look out for small signs in your child and to keep them close to you even at night.

Blood sugar

We check the baby's blood sugar 3-5 hours after birth and also 24 hours after to make sure that the baby is absorbing the food.

Neonatal jaundice

Babies who are born a bit prematurely have an increased risk of neonatal jaundice. In these cases, the baby's skin becomes a bit yellowish 5-7 days after birth. It can be easily measured with a bilirubin test through the skin, or with a blood test at the maternity ward during the follow-up visit to the hospital. If a child has an elevated value, they will receive treatment using a 'phototherapy light' (UV light) which breaks down the bilirubin.

Infection

A premature baby has an immature immune system and a higher risk of getting infections. It is a good idea to pay attention to certain signs in your baby, such as lethargy, fever, a reduced desire to suckle, abnormal skin color and rapid breathing. Avoid close contact with infected people.

Urine and feces

Once breastfeeding has started, the baby usually has 5-6 wet diapers per day and usually daily stools.

Feel free to ask us for help!
/Maternity and delivery staff