

Stages of Behavior

What to expect with your premature baby

Premature babies have different needs than full-term babies. Babies who are born early have a lot of developing yet to do. They are not ready to interact with the world in the same way that full-term babies are.

Because of this, before we touch or talk to your baby, we take the time to watch their cues so that we are sure they are ready for interaction. (Please read “Caring for Your Baby” to learn more about cues).

These are the basic behavior stages of a premature baby:

Less than 32 Weeks

Most times, a baby born before 32 weeks is not ready to interact with the environment or people. Lights, sounds, and touch may be too much for a baby this young. If you gave birth before 32 weeks, your baby may avoid interactions by “shutting down” or falling asleep.

32 to 35 Weeks

A baby between 32 to 35 weeks of age (who is medically stable) may be able to handle some interaction with the environment and caregivers. But lights, sounds, and touch can still be overwhelming to these babies. A baby this age will timidly begin to open to interaction as they are ready. Caregivers need to pay close attention to the baby’s cues that tell whether the baby wants to continue or to stop the interaction.

More than 35 Weeks

A baby who is 36 weeks or older acts very much like a full-term newborn. They tolerate touch, eye contact, movement, and even noise and light. They most likely enjoy interacting with caregivers and the environment. But, since a young baby may still be sensitive to noise and light, keep watch for signs of stress during your interactions.



Before we touch or talk to your baby, we make sure they are ready for the interaction.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

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