NHS
Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

**We can provide interpreters for a variety of languages, information in larger print or other formats (e.g. audio) - please call us on 01932 723553.**

**To use the Text Relay service, prefix all numbers with 18001.**

اگر نیاز به ترجمه دارید، لطفا با شماره 01932 723553 تماس بگیرید.

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਤਰਜਮੇ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਨੰਬਰ ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ: 01932 723553

اگرآپ اِس کا اُردو زبان میں ترجمہ چاہتے ہیں، تو براہِ کرم اِس فون نمبر 01932 723553 پر رابطہ کریں

Se precisa de uma tradução por favor contacte: 01932 723553

আপনার অনুবাদের দরকার হলে এখানে যোগাযোগ করুন : 01932 723553

यदि आपको अनुवाद की ज़रूरत है तो कृपया इस नंबर पर फोन करें: 01932 723553

Jeżeli chcemy, aby te informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić 01932 723553

**Ashford Hospital**
London Road
Ashford, Middlesex
TW15 3AA
Tel: **01784 884488**

**St. Peter's Hospital**
Guildford Road
Chertsey, Surrey
KT16 0PZ.
Tel: **01932 872000**

Website: **www.ashfordstpeters.nhs.uk**

**Patients first • Personal responsibility • Passion for excellence • Pride in our team**

NHS
Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

# Supporting Your Baby's Development 36-40 Weeks Gestation

## Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

**Patient Information**

## Supporting Your Baby's Development 36 – 40 weeks gestation

Congratulations on the birth of your baby. Having a baby in a Neonatal Unit can be frightening but this leaflet will tell you a little about what to expect from your baby at this age and importantly, how you can help their development.

It is not designed to replace information you will get from your baby's doctors, nurses and therapists. If you have concerns or questions about your baby's development please talk to the Neonatal staff.

All babies are individuals and each one will develop at a slightly different rate. Your baby's development will be affected by gestation at birth, how much they weigh and by how well they are.

Each baby's genetic make-up will also play a part in how they develop and mature. In the womb the baby will experience a variety of sensations – some pleasant, some not so pleasant.

The baby will move around in the amniotic fluid and be able to get hands to mouth. They will hear their mother's voice and other sounds from outside. The baby will sleep and be active according to mother's daily pattern of activity.

The newborn preterm baby has to quickly accommodate to their new surroundings. These surroundings affect behavior and development and it is important that we recognize how your baby reacts and how we can help their development to progress.



baby will like to be held close and they may snuggle into your body.

Be patient and watch your baby when they are calm and when they appear to need rest. You will soon learn to recognize your baby's individual cues. Don't rely on the monitors – learn to understand your baby!

For more information see the Bliss Baby Charity website at:-

www.bliss.org.uk

or phone 0500 618140

## Further Information

We endeavour to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Matron, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty.
If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Experience Team on 01932 723553 or email asp-tr.patient.advice@nhs.net. If you remain concerned, the team can also advise upon how to make a formal complaint.

**Author:** Development Care Team **Department:** Women's Health
**Version:** 2 **Published:** Jun 2019 **Review:** Jun 2022

periods in a baby chair. Some time on their tummy when they are awake will help their development.

## Nappy changing / Bathing

Nappy changing can be disturbing for babies of this gestation. Your baby may soon be ready for their first bath.

### What you can do to help

Provide support while you change your baby's nappy. Avoid lifting your baby's legs high. Your baby may cope better with bathing if they are wrapped and placed gently into warm water, (swaddled bathing) for the first two or three baths.

## Social

Your baby may now be ready for some social interaction. He/she may begin to alert or 'still' when they hear your voice. If their eyes are shaded from the light they may briefly 'look' at you.

### What you can do to help

Allow your baby as much peace and quiet as possible. Talk to your baby when they are awake. You may like to sing to them or to read from a book. Move your head slowly as your baby is looking at you as they will begin to follow a moving object. Your



This is a time when your baby's brain is growing at a very rapid rate and it is important that what we all do and how we do it is as developmentally appropriate as possible.

## Your baby is 36 – 40 weeks gestation (close to term).

Care for your baby will be gentle. Your baby needs a quiet environment and protection from bright light because the senses are development and are not quite mature.

The Neonatal Unit staff will help you to care for your baby. Always ask the nurse looking after your baby about their condition before you touch or handle. Ask if you need help or you don't understand what is happening.

## Touching and holding

Your baby's movements will be quite smooth with few jerks and tremors. They will be able to tuck in arms and legs. Your baby's skin may be sensitive but they will like to be held.

### What you can do to help

Speak to your baby softly before you touch your baby.
Your baby may enjoy rhythmic stroking or some gentle rocking too and fro. Avoid abrupt changes in position.
Keep your baby's arms and legs tucked in when you move him/her.

Skin to skin is recommended at this stage if the staff feels that your baby is ready for this and you feel ready to start.

## Feeding

Your baby will often be waking up before a feed is due. Suck and swallowing are becoming coordinated. Your baby may be starting to feed from your breast or from a bottle, but may still need some feeds through a tube. They will be ready to suck a dummy (with your consent) during tube feeds. Hold your baby while they are being tube-fed.

### What you can do to help

It is really important to collect your breast milk as soon as you can so that it is ready for your baby as soon as they are ready. We aim to give your breast milk within 2 hours of birth. Breast milk is one of the best things you can do for your baby. Continue expressing if your baby is not able to take all feeds from the breast or bottle. If your baby is bottle fed keep them wrapped in a light blanket. Shield your baby's eyes from bright lights. Try to avoid care giving such as nappy changing immediately before a feed as this can tire your baby and make feeding more difficult. Do skin to skin cuddles as often and for as long as possible as this may help your milk supply.



## Sleeping

Your baby will have periods of deep and light sleep with some awake periods. At this stage your baby will cry robustly. Your baby will generally be placed to sleep on their back. Your baby may begin to sleep for longer periods at night.

### What you can do to help

Let your baby have periods of undisturbed sleep. Try not to wake your baby if they appear to be sleeping. Protect your baby's eyes from the light and try to avoid loud noise. Your baby will like to hear your voice and recognize your voice if you speak softly. Try to do cares and interact with your baby during these awake periods.

## Positioning

Your baby's movements are generally smooth. They can stretch their arms and legs. Your baby may still need some support keeping limbs close to the body.

### What you can do to help

Your baby needs to have their hands close to their face and their legs curled up – like they were in the womb. Your baby should be positioned on their back when asleep. Your baby may enjoy short