

What is developmental care?

Developmental care means letting the baby's behavior guide his or her contact with other people. Most healthy term and late preterm infants enjoy being spoken to, sung to, held, rocked, etc. These actions also help the baby develop. However, some premature or sick babies may find these same actions stressful.

How does developmental care work?

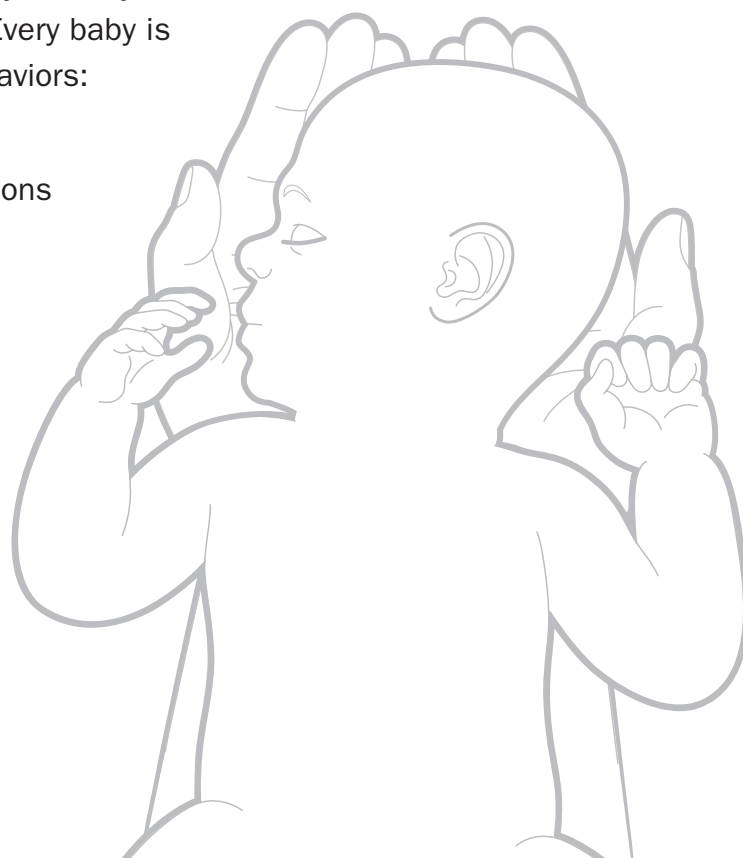
Your health care team will help you learn when your baby wants to interact and when he or she is stressed. Every baby is different, but you may see some of these behaviors:

Baby wants to interact:

- Relaxed arms, legs and facial expressions
- Sucking on fingers or hands
- Awake and quiet
- Bright and shiny eyes
- Focused attention (looking)
- Sucking movements
- Fingers curled
- Turning toward sound

Baby feels stressed:

- Change in breathing rate
- Change in heart rate
- Change in color (pale, bluish)
- Frowning or grimacing
- Crying and fussing
- Squirming
- Spreading fingers out wide (splaying)
- Yawning



Supporting the baby with your hands may be helpful.

Over time, you'll learn which behaviors your baby uses to communicate.

Understanding Developmental Care (continued)

What's the best way to interact with my baby?

Use your baby's behavior to find out which actions he or she likes and dislikes. You may have to try several different things. Here are some suggestions:

- Discover the type of touch that soothes and comforts your baby. Try resting your hand on the baby instead of patting or stroking
- For babies that aren't ready to be held, try supporting the baby in the crib or isolette. Place your hand on the baby's head, rump, feet, or stomach. Be sure to just support the baby in place; do not move your hand
- Let your baby grasp your finger
- Speak or read to your baby in a low, quiet voice for short periods of time (often 5 to 10 minutes)
- If possible, have your baby look at your face
- Remember that some babies get stressed if there is too much going on. Try doing just one thing at time, such as speaking, rocking, or touching

What do I do if my baby seems stressed?

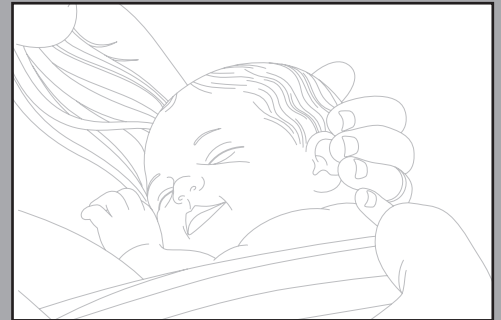
Stressed babies need rest, usually in a quiet, dimly-lit place.

What will happen next?

As your baby grows and develops, his or her behavior will change. Some actions will become less stressful. Work with your healthcare team to figure out what's best for your baby.

Kangaroo Care

Some babies in the NICU may benefit from skin-to-skin contact. When the baby is snuggled into the parent's chest, the practice is called kangaroo care. Both mothers and fathers can participate in kangaroo care.



If your baby is ready to be held, kangaroo care can result in:

- More stable heart rate and breathing
- More rapid weight gain
- Less crying
- Improved bonding between parent and child

Talk with your health care team about whether kangaroo care is right for your baby.

Please visit www.nicu-pet.com to download additional copies.

NOTES:

Signature: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____