

You and your premature baby: 10 months



Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota

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NICU Follow-Up Clinic

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What to expect this month

our baby may show more emotions and moods, both positive and negative. Your baby shows affection for favorite people, and may have a talent for attracting and keeping their attention. At the same time, fear and uneasiness around strangers is common, especially if they come too close. Now, more than before, baby may be upset when mom or dad leaves. This signals further maturation of the brain's memory centers. Your baby can better distinguish between people he knows well and those he doesn't.

Learn to read your baby's signals. Follow his lead. Stick with the activities he likes when he is happy and interested. If boredom or stress sets in, stop the activity and try it again later.

Acknowledge and label your baby's feelings. For example, if your baby fusses at naptime, you might say, "You feel mad when daddy has to leave you. I will see you when you wake up from your nap." Saying things like this helps your baby move from negative to positive moods more easily and helps him learn to label his emotions.

Caring for your baby

Am I overprotective?

Preemies need extra attention, so you would have to go to great lengths to be considered overprotective that first year. While your baby needs all the protection you can give, don't guard your baby from everything. Bumps and falls are an important part of growing up. Falling teaches balancing skills needed for sitting and walking. Babies who are afraid to fall will be slower learning to walk. Babies need lots of time on the floor. They need to experiment with moving their bodies and exploring their environment.

Socialization

When your baby's health is stable enough, consider playgroups or Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) programs to help with early "socialization." Babies this age won't necessarily play together, but can be fascinated by each other. You can learn parenting skills from an experienced ECFE parent educator and exchange parenting strategies with others in the group.

For more information about local classes, day and evening, call your local school district. If your baby has chronic lung disease and cannot have much social contact, ask if local ECFE staff can make home visits. This is another wonderful way to gain insight into your baby's development

This month with baby

Movement

I like to:

- pull myself up to stand, even though I may only stand briefly.
- side-step along furniture.
- climb up and down from chairs.

I enjoy it when you:

- encourage me to press the doorbell or elevator button.
- play a game of “I’ll let go-if you will.”
- place me standing at a low stool or coffee table, then encourage me to imitate you as you lift your hands away from the table.

Playing

I like to:

- show my emotions and preferences.
- copy gestures, faces, and sounds.
- have favorite toys and express tenderness toward a stuffed animal.
- express my concern for others.

I enjoy it when:

- you respect my emotions and preferences.
- you make silly faces with me and see if I make them, too.
- you give me a doll or stuffed toy to cuddle.
- I show tenderness to my doll. I am imitating you.

Thinking

I like to:

- use one hand to hold a toy and the other one to manipulate it.
- match 2 blocks.
- reach behind me for a toy I can’t see.

I enjoy it when you:

- encourage me to unwrap gifts; help me by starting a hole in the paper.
- name simple body parts on a picture, then on you and me.

Communicating

I like to:

- say one or two words, or listen to familiar words.
- follow simple directions, such as “kiss the baby.”
- learn words and motions, such as waving “bye-bye.”

I enjoy it when you:

- sing songs or play finger games like pat-a-cake and Itsy Bitsy Spider.
- give me lots of chances to show what I understand. For example, ask “Where’s your bottle?”