

You and your premature baby:

3 months

Adjusted age: measured from the due date



www.childrensmn.org

NICU Follow-Up Clinic

(612) 813-6722, Children's - Minneapolis

(651) 220-8063, Children's - St. Paul

About your baby's age

All babies—and especially high-risk babies—need large amounts of caregiving time. A home is never the same after a birth; a baby's needs come before household chores. It would take superhuman energy to keep a perfect house, prepare gourmet meals, and give your baby the very best care. Lower your housekeeping standards by at least two notches! Children will never remember a clean closet, but they will remember if you spent time with them.

If you're wondering, "Why can't I get more done?" try this trick. Each day, write a list of what you want to accomplish. Be realistic: don't make it too long or too hard. As you finish each item on the list, cross it off and reward yourself: prop up your feet, call a friend, or have a healthy snack.

Caring for your baby

Muscle development

Give your baby plenty of "floor time." On a clean blanket or rug, lay the baby down on his tummy, back, and side. Your baby's natural curiosity and desire to move will help build muscle tone and strength in the neck, back, and trunk.

Use infant seats sparingly. While they are great for short periods, perhaps 15 minutes at a time, constant or prolonged use may keep your baby from learning to control the neck and back muscles.

Muscles work two ways: they stretch (extend) and they bend (flex). Because of early positioning in the NICU, your baby probably has already had practice stretching the leg and trunk muscles. Therefore, avoid overusing ExerSaucers®, and Johnny Jump Ups since they encourage more stretching. What your baby needs now is flexing and bending. "Floor time" helps with that.

This month with baby

Here's what 3-month-old babies might tell you...if they could!

Napping and time out

My nap schedule may be a little more predictable, giving you some time to relax or get things done. I need quiet times as well as playing times. When I'm tired or overstimulated I may look away, withdraw, or go to sleep. I need time to relax; I will be ready to play later.

Movement

I like to watch and move my hands, even when they're empty. I enjoy this when I am lying on my tummy or back. Placing me on my side with a pillow behind me helps me bring my hands together, which is even more fun. To help me notice my hands, try shining a flashlight on them once in a while, or give me a wristband or a colorful sticker to wear on my hands. (Don't leave me alone with a sticker. I might eat it!)

I also like to:

- sit while you support me with your hands.
- hold my hands open most of the time. My grasp reflex is fading.

I enjoy it when you:

- position safe pictures and toys in my crib, so I must raise my head to look at them.
- place a rolled towel under my arms as I lie on my tummy. This helps me to enjoy this position.
- hold me sitting up in your lap or between your legs on the floor. A moving toy at eye level may encourage me to practice sitting longer.
- stroke the back of my hand. It helps me relax.

Playing

I like to:

- smile when we play.
- gurgle and coo in response to sounds.
- giggle when you tickle my stomach or feet.

Communicating

I'm more social these days. I enjoy being talked to and can respond with a variety of sounds. I may even squeal with delight at my newly discovered sounds.

I like to:

- try to see where a sound comes from by turning my head and neck.
- distinguish voices from other sounds.
- stop sucking to listen to an interesting sound.

I enjoy it when you:

- entertain me by clicking your tongue, snapping your fingers, or humming.
- talk or sing to me. Your voice is my favorite sound!