

Your Late Preterm Infant

 Elliot Health System

What Every Parent Should Know

A late preterm infant is a baby born 3 to 6 weeks early. This is a baby born between 34 and 37 weeks of pregnancy. Babies born just a few weeks early have special needs that will be closely watched by the nurses and doctors caring for your baby.

Feedings:

- 👉 Late preterm infants tend to feed more slowly and need to be fed more often than full term babies.
- 👉 He or she may not be able to take in as much breastmilk or formula as a full term infant.
- 👉 When feeding your baby, you may notice that your baby may be sleepy and want to sleep through feedings. This means that you will need to wake your baby for feedings.
- 👉 Feed your baby at least every 2 to 3 hours.
- 👉 Pay close attention to your infant during feedings. A sleepy baby may doze off or slip off your nipple.
- 👉 Your baby should have at least 5 to 6 wet diapers and stool 2 to 3 times each day.
- 👉 Frequent feedings for the first several days may help prevent jaundice.
- 👉 Contact your baby's doctor if your baby begins to refuse feedings – even for less than a day.
- 👉 Contact your doctor if it takes your baby longer than one hour to feed.
- 👉 The best way to know that your baby is feeding well is your baby's weight gain.

- 👉 Your baby's weight will be checked during doctor's appointments or during a follow-up visit from the visiting nurse or lactation consultant.

Safe Sleep:

- 👉 Late preterm infants tend to be sleepier than most full term infants.
- 👉 Check the Elliot Hospital iBirth app about safe sleep for babies, and prevention of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) and suffocation.
- 👉 All babies need to sleep in a place to prevent SIDS and suffocation. Remember “Bare is Best” “Back to Sleep” and “Same Room, Separate Surface.”
- 👉 Sleep sacks are a great way to keep your baby warm. The Elliot Hospital provides each family with a gift sleep sack when you go home with your baby.
- 👉 Provide your baby with a smoke free home. Smoking around the baby, or smoke residue on a person's clothing have been shown to cause infant health problems including SIDS.

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Jaundice:

- 🧡 Late preterm infants may be more likely to develop jaundice, a symptom of a condition called hyperbilirubinemia.
- 🧡 In rare cases, that can lead to severe brain damage if not identified and treated early.
- 🧡 Your baby's doctor and visiting nurse or lactation consultant will be checking your baby for jaundice. Signs of hyperbilirubinemia are: deep yellowing of the skin and eyes, increased sleepiness, poor feedings, increased irritability, or high-pitched cry.
- 🧡 If your baby has any of these symptoms, call your baby's doctor.

Stimulation:

- 🧡 Late preterm infants may easily become over-stimulated and stressed.
- 🧡 Routine activities such as household conversations, rocking, a noisy room, music, or constant vibration may stress your baby.
- 🧡 Watch your baby for signs of stress: frequent spreading of fingers like a "stop" hand signal, arching or limpness, increased crying, and difficulty feeding.
- 🧡 Limit visitors after baby is born until you know how your baby responds to stimulation and you learn cues for when your baby is stressed.

Breathing:

- 🧡 Late preterm infants can be at greater risk of breathing problems. Their lungs may not be fully developed at the time of birth.
- 🧡 Limit the time your baby spends in an upright position.
- 🧡 Make sure that the baby sits upright no longer than 90 minutes at a time. This includes time sitting in infant seats, strollers, swings and car seats. Your baby may get tired and have problems breathing if left in sitting position for too long.
- 🧡 Signs that your baby is have problems breathing are: noisy breathing, very fast breathing, or long pauses in between breaths (longer than 30 seconds). If your baby has any of these signs, call your baby's doctor.

Temperature:

- 🧡 Late preterm infants have less body fat than full term infants. Because of this, they have a harder time staying warm and may use more energy to keep warm.
- 🧡 Suggestions for keeping your baby warm: provide them with skin-to-skin contact, keep them away from drafts, and when not skin-to-skin, dress your baby in one more layer than you are wearing.
- 🧡 Normal body temperature is 97.7 F to 99.3F.
- 🧡 If your baby feels too warm or too cool to your touch, take your baby's rectal temperature. Check the Elliot Hospital iBirth app for how to take a rectal temperature.
- 🧡 Call your baby's doctor if her or his rectal temperature is less than 97.5F or higher than 100.4F.

Infection:

- 🧡 Late preterm infants have an immune system that is not fully formed, which makes it harder for them to fight infection.
- 🧡 Hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of germs and infections.
- 🧡 Anyone who cares for your baby needs to wash their hands before touching or holding your baby.
- 🧡 Do not allow any visitors who are sick to be around your baby.
- 🧡 When you first go home, it is important to avoid crowds: shopping malls, grocery stores and other places where that are lots of people. These crowded places may expose your baby to germs and infection.
- 🧡 You and any person caring for your baby should get a flu shot.
- 🧡 You and any person caring for your baby should have an adult pertussis booster shot. This helps you and your baby to limit contact with these serious infections.