



EARLY INTERACTION WITH YOUR BABY AT HOME

As you prepare for going home with your baby, it can be helpful to understand more about what you can do to support your baby's early development in their first few months at home.

If your baby was born early it is important to use their 'corrected age' when thinking about their development and growth. A baby's corrected age is taken from the date that they were due, not the date they were born. For example, if your child is now four months old, and was born three months early, then their 'corrected age' is one month old. 'Corrected age' is used to assess development until babies are two to three years old.

The home environment

Providing a space at home that best supports your baby's needs is an important part of supporting your baby's development. An environment that includes a variety of activities, positions and things to stimulate the senses can help improve motor learning (how a baby use their body) and memory.

- Introduce different toys for your baby to look at, reach for and hold
- Use a range of different positions for your baby so they learn to control their body in different ways
- Use positions that allow your baby to easily move around or reach for a toy
- Introduce other types of stimulation that support behavioural and sensory development. These may include massage, different textured toys, music etc.
- Watch your baby's cues and respond to them when they are ready for more or may need a break or a rest.

Early social interaction

Your baby will enjoy and benefit from interacting with you. Choose a time when you and your baby are quietly alone together and let them 'set the pace'. Watch your baby's cues to see how they are coping and provide breaks if you think they are getting tired or overstimulated. Some signs that your baby has had enough play include, getting fidgety, turning their head away from you.

Some ideas for activities

- Talk or sing to your baby - use different voice sounds
- Smile and make exaggerated facial expressions
- Imitate your baby's sounds or faces
- Stroke or massage your baby

- Use books or toys for your baby to look at – bright colours or black and white contrasting colours are best
- Watch your baby communicate with you – turning to your voice, following you as you move, becoming excited when they see you
- Look at your baby - remember a distance of about 20-30cm is the best for your baby to be able to see you.



Early toys

- Black and white contrasting pictures or toys
- Small rattles for placing in the hand
- Musical toys
- Mobiles with bright, contrasting colours
- Simple toys such as rings, shiny paper, beads that can be dangled in front of them
- Toys with different textures
- Simple picture books

For more information

Talk to your local doctor (GP), paediatrician or Maternal and Child Health nurse.

Related fact sheets on the Women's website

Positioning your baby for play and interaction