

Name of Child: _____ Date: _____

Help Your Baby with Stress

Babies need 38 to 40 weeks to fully develop before they are born. This is called a **full term pregnancy**. Babies who are born healthy and at full term are usually ready to respond to the world around them. Babies who are born sick or early (**premature**) are often sensitive and easily stressed. This is because their nervous systems may not be as developed as healthy, full term babies. Babies who are tired or have too much going on around them can show signs of being stressed.

What you might see:

Your child might show these signs of stress:

- tremors
- startles
- yawning
- stretching
- spitting up
- changes in skin color
- becoming limp
- closing eyes
- looking away
- arching the back
- stiffening arms and legs
- panicked or worried look
- fussy and crying



Babies who are tired can show signs of being stressed.

How to decrease your baby's stress:

Babies who are sick or very small need all their energy to grow and develop. Decreasing your baby's stress can help with this growth and development. Sometimes touching a baby too much may cause the baby to be stressed. Talk to your baby's doctor or nurse about the best way to touch your baby and how often to touch your baby. This is based on the stage of your baby's development.

To decrease your baby's stress in the hospital:

- Keep lights down low and shield your baby's eyes when awake. Put a blanket over the baby's bed when asleep if your baby is less than 32 weeks corrected age.
 - If you want more information, ask your doctor or nurse for the handout **Corrected Age #1643**
- Play music softly or read to your baby when your baby is awake. Discourage loud noises and voices. Keep the environment quiet.
- Position your baby using blanket rolls or stuffed animals. Keep arms and legs tucked and hands near face.
- Use a speciality pillow to help prevent flattening of your baby's head when your baby is on his or her back or side.
- Help your baby suck on a pacifier or finger even if your baby cannot eat right now. This will soothe your baby and may help your baby grow faster.
- Remember to give your baby rest periods frequently.
- Provide Kangaroo Holding if your baby's doctor says it is okay.
 - If you want more information, ask your doctor or nurse for the handout **Kangaroo Holding #469**



Provide Kangaroo Holding if your baby's doctor says it is okay.

How to decrease your baby's stress at home once discharged:

- Be sure it is quiet when your baby eats. It is easier for your baby to suck, swallow, and breathe when it is quiet.
- Put only one or two soft colored objects around your baby at a time. It takes a lot of energy to look at many things.
- Wrap your baby in a blanket. Make sure to tuck your baby's shoulders in the blanket but keep the hands free. This allows your baby to suck on fingers and hold things. You can use a sleep sack for your baby.
- Play soft music to help your baby relax when your baby is awake. Your baby might have trouble sleeping if it is too quiet.
- Cradle your baby in your arms when you feed your baby. It will make it easier for your baby to suck, swallow, and breathe.
- Dim the lights when your baby is eating. If the lights are low, your baby may open his or her eyes and look at you.
- Try not to talk, rock, and feed your baby at the same time. This might increase stress when too many things are going on at the same time.
- Hold your baby at your shoulder and gently rub and pat your baby's back to help burp. Be sure to support your baby's head when burping your baby.
- Hold your baby close to your chest for a little while if your baby starts to hiccup, sneeze, or yawn. You can still do Kangaroo Holding at home.
- Try baby massage with a little lotion when baby is rested and awake. Use strokes down arms and legs, away from your baby's body, and massage slowly.
- Put your baby on his or her back for safe sleeping. Do not use pillows, blanket rolls, or other supports to position your baby. Make sure there are no stuffed animals in your baby's bed.
- Put your baby on his or her tummy when awake to make his or her muscles strong, including neck, arms, and chest.

- Please ask visitors to wait until your baby is older and stronger before they come to see your baby.
- Keep your baby away from crowded places. This helps your baby avoid catching germs and keeps your baby from being stressed from the noise and lights.

Watch how your baby behaves and look for signs of stress. Your baby might need a break if he or she shows signs of stress. You may also want to decrease light, sound, and activities around your baby to help decrease stress.



If you have any questions or concerns,
 call your child's doctor or call _____

Now that you've read this:

- Tell your doctor or nurse signs of stress that your baby might show (check when done).
- Tell your doctor or nurse how to decrease your baby's stress at the hospital (check when done).
- Tell your doctor or nurse how to decrease your baby's stress at home (check when done).

If you want to know more about child health and illness,
visit our library at The Emily Center at Phoenix Children's Hospital
1919 East Thomas Road
Phoenix, AZ 85016
602-933-1400
866-933-6459
www.phoenixchildrens.org
www.theemilycenter.org
Facebook: facebook.com/theemilycenter
Twitter: @emilycenter
Pinterest: pinterest.com/emilycenter

Disclaimer

The information provided at this site is intended to be general information, and is provided for educational purposes only. It is not intended to take the place of examination, treatment, or consultation with a physician. Phoenix Children's Hospital urges you to contact your physician with any questions you may have about a medical condition.

June 8, 2016 • DRAFT to family review
1644 • Written by Nicki Mitchell, MSN, RN • Illustrated by Irene Takamizu

Help Baby with Stress

Name of Health Care Provider: _____

Date returned: _____ db

Family Review of Handout

Health care providers: Please teach families with this handout.

Families: Please let us know what you think of this handout.

Would you say this handout is hard to read? Yes No

easy to read? Yes No

Please circle the parts of the handout that were hard to understand.

Would you say this handout is interesting to read? Yes No

Why or why not?

Would you do anything differently after reading
this handout? Yes No

If yes, what?

After reading this handout, do you have any
questions about the subject? Yes No

If yes, what?

Is there anything you don't like about the drawings?

Yes

No

If yes, what?

What changes would you make in this handout to make it better or easier to understand?

Please return your review of this handout to your nurse or doctor or send it to the address below.

The Emily Center
Health Education Specialist
Phoenix Children's Hospital
1919 East Thomas Road
Phoenix, AZ 85016-7710

602-933-1395

Thank you for helping us!