

Premature Babies Sense of Touch

Your Premature Baby

Your baby's sense of touch develops at a very early stage of development whilst still in the womb. Your sense of touch has two different mechanisms; it is there to keep you safe as well as provide comfort. We therefore react in two different ways; we either enjoy touch and look for more, or we withdraw from it. Research has shown that as early as 5 weeks post conception a foetus responds to being touched by drawing away from unexpected touch in the womb.

By 32 weeks every part of a baby's skin is sensitive to the light stroke of a single hair.



Effects of Touch on Your Baby

- Gentle touch can be soothing. Your baby will show you whether or not they like touch; you just need to look at their reactions as they will pull away if they don't like something. There are 2 types of touch; still (also called 'comfort holding') and stroking.
- Stroke your baby smoothly and very gently, but firm enough to not tickle. Remember though that stroking is stimulating and may be too much for your baby. Be aware of your baby's different states of arousal (see 'Your Baby's States of Arousal' leaflet for more information). Sometimes holding your baby with still, resting hands is more comforting for them.
- If your baby is premature it may not be possible to cuddle them as much as you would like to but there are other ways that you can bond. Let your baby hold your finger to know that you are there.
- 'Kangaroo care' or skin-on-skin is a wonderful experience for both you and your baby. It gives you the chance to hold your baby, keep them warm and let them feel secure. Speak to your baby's care team for advice, guidance and support with this.

